

THE IDEA OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

A Study of its Development in the
First Three Centuries

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Divinity of the University of
Edinburgh in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Ph.D.
degree

1 May 1948

PREFACE

It is the purpose of this dissertation to examine the Christian documents of the first three centuries to determine what constituted the unity of the primitive Ecclesia and how that unity was altered by the Church's growth and development. This is not a fresh plea for union, much less a blue-print for Church unity today. The intention, rather, is to make an analysis of what constituted a vital, though largely unselfconscious element of early Church life.

My sincere thanks are due to my faculty advisors, the Reverend Professors J. H. S. Burleigh, D.D. and William Manson, D.D. for their valuable criticisms and suggestions. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to the Reverend Professor J. S. Stewart, D.D. and to the Reverend J. B. Primrose for reading portions of the manuscript and offering helpful comments. Finally, grateful mention should be made of the invaluable aid of the Assistant Librarian, Miss E. R. Leslie, who gave freely of her time whenever it was needed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	11
Contents	111
List of Abbreviations	iv
Introduction	vii
Chapter I THE BACKGROUND IN JUDAISM	1
Chapter II JESUS CHRIST THE LORD	51
Chapter III THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT	100
Chapter IV DOCTRINE AND TRADITION	158
Chapter V PRIESTHOOD AND EPISCOPATE	203
Chapter VI CONCLUSIONS	246
Appendix A Texts and Translations	257
Appendix B On Divisive Unities	259
Bibliography	263

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of Primary Sources

- Acta Joh. - Acta Johannaë (Apocryphal Acts of John).
- Adv. Haer. - Irenaeus, Detectionis et Eversionis Falso Cognominate Agnitionis (A Refutation and Subversion of Knowledge Falsely So-Called) better known as Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies).
- Adv. Marc. - Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem (Against Marcion).
- Adv. Prax. - Tertullian, Adversus Praxean (Against Praxean).
- Ant. - Josephus, Antiquitates Judaicae (Jewish Antiquities).
- Apol. - Justin Martyr, Apologia pro Christianis (Apology on Behalf of the Christians).
- BJ - Josephus, De Bello Judaico (On the Jewish Wars).
- Clem. Alex. - Clemens Alexandrinus (Clement of Alexandria).
- Cohort. ad Gent. - Clement of Alexandria, Cohortatio ad Gentes (Exhortation to the Heathen).
- Cohort. ad Graec. - Justin Martyr, Cohortatio ad Graecos (Exhortation to the Greeks).
- De bapt. - Tertullian, De baptismo (On Baptism).
- De dom. orat. - Cyprian, De dominica oratione (On the Lord's Prayer).
- De exhort. cast. - Tertullian, De exhortatio castitatis (On Exhortation to Chastity).
- De ieiun. - Tertullian, De ieiunio adversus psychicos (On Fasting; Against the Psychics).
- De monog. - Tertullian, De monogamia (On Monogamy).
- De orat. - Tertullian, De oratione (On Prayer).
- De praescrip. haer. - Tertullian, De praescriptione haereticorum (On Prescription Against Heretics).
- De unitate - Cyprian, De catholicae ecclesiae unitate (On the Unity of the Church Catholic).

De virg. vel. - Tertullian, De virginibus velandis
(On the Veiling of Virgins).

Dial. c. Trypho. - Justin Martyr, Dialogus cum Tryphone
Judaeo (Dialogue with Trypho the Jew).

Ep. - Epistle. Epp. - Epistles.

Eph. - Ignatius, Epistle to the Ephesians.

H.E. - Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiasticae (Ecclesiastical History).

Legat. - Athenagoras, Legatio pro Christianis (A Plea for the Christians).

Magn. - Ignatius, Epistle to the Magnesians.

Mand. - Shepherd of Hermas, Mandates.

Mart. Polyc. - The Martyrdom of Polycarp.

Phil. - Polycarp, Epistle to the Philippians.

Philad. - Ignatius, Epistle to the Philadelphians.

Polyc. - Ignatius, Epistle to Polycarp.

Rom. - Ignatius, Epistle to the Romans.

Sent. Episc. - Cyprian, Sententiae Episcoporum Numero
LXXXVII de Haereticis Baptizandis (The Judgment of
87 Bishops on the Baptism of Heretics).

Sim. - Shepherd of Hermas, Similitudes.

Smyr. - Ignatius, Epistle to the Smyrnaeans.

Strom. - Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis (Miscellanies).

Trall. - Ignatius, Epistle to the Trallians.

Vis. - Shepherd of Hermas, Visions.

Abbreviations of Reference Works

(For full bibliographical data vide Bibliography)

BC - Foakes-Jackson, F.J. and Lake, Kirsopp (editors), The
Beginnings of Christianity: Part I The Acts of the
Apostles. 5 vols.

EB - The Encyclopaedia Britannica.

HDB - A Dictionary of the Bible. James Hastings, editor,
5 vols.

HLOG - A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. James
Hastings, editor. 2 vols.

HERE - Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. James
Hastings, editor. 13 vols.

ICC - The International Critical Commentary.

JE - The Jewish Encyclopedia.

MNTC - The Moffatt New Testament Commentaries.

INTRODUCTION

Among the many live issues of the last half century few have excited such universal interest and contention as the subject of Church unity.¹ There can be little doubt that the political and economic unrest of our time have had a great deal to do with this renewed interest; two world wars have undermined the belief that man can solve his problems by political means alone. As faith in man declines, hope in God rises, and it is to God's earthly institution, the Church, that many turn for an answer of peace. The Church, however, seems to be as divided spiritually as the world is politically. Hence there arises the immediate necessity to unite the Church in order to unite the world.

Another cause for this recent interest in unity is the marked shift in scholarly opinion on what constitutes the nature of the New Testament Church. Among protestant scholars during the eighties of the last century there was fairly general agreement that the Church was a religious organization created by the free association of devout Christians.² All the emphasis was on the

¹ The two bibliographical collections of Auguste Sanaud (Christian Unity: A Bibliography), and Henry R. T. Brandreth (Unity and Reunion: A Bibliography), indicate the scope of the literature involved, but even these by no means exhaust the list of sources.

² This view has been admirably surveyed in the first chapter of Olaf Linton's book, Das Problem der Urkirche in der neueren Forschung. Cf. also Visser T'Hooft and J.H. Oldham, The Church and its Function in Society, pp. 23f.

individual and his relation to the congregation, while the whole Church was conceived as being merely the sum total of all the individual congregations lumped together. Scholarly research centered around the sociological and political interpretation of the Church organization, its officers and ministrations.

This viewpoint, however, has slowly changed. The way was paved by the work of such eminent historians as Hatch, Harnack, and Sohm, until today a totally different conception prevails. Instead of being considered as a political and sociological institution, the Church is now treated in religious and theological terms. The redemptive power which is its very life is seen to come from above rather than from below, to emanate from God rather than from man.³ Such a radical volte-face centered attention on the whole rather than the parts and opened the way for a study of the unity of the primitive Church. From this study it was devoutly hoped there would emerge some clue whereby the present lamentable divisions in Christendom could be healed.

But, alas, such was not to be the case for some considerable time. Many of the historians engaged in

³ "The Church began not as a collection of individuals united in the same faith but as a community. As in the former age God had chosen for himself a people, so in his kingdom he would ordain a people to serve him." E.F. Scott, The Beginnings of the Church, p. 272. The Church is "a body of men and women in which the unity of every part corresponds to, repeats, represents and in fact is the unity of the whole." Edwyn Hoskyns, The Riddle of the New Testament, p. 32.

research were unable to prevent polemic considerations from obscuring their critical judgment. To the question "What was the nature of the unity in the early Church?" they replied with apostolic succession, or true doctrine, or spiritual unity, or, in short, anything that served their own predilection. Nor was each scholar without considerable justification for his position. The welter of evidence from the Christian documents of the first few centuries would seem to give impartial support to a wide number of divergent views. Thus, the problem is seen to be most complex and involved; the more impartially it is faced, the more difficult it becomes.

In the face of this dilemma, a number of writers have abandoned all hope of finding a basis of Church unity. One theologian avoided the word "Church" altogether and sought instead for a "unity of religion."⁴ Others deny that there ever has been or could be any "absolute apostolic unity."⁵ And there the matter stands. The purpose of this paper in raising the issue once more is not to elaborate a new scheme for Church union today. Rather, it is to investigate the nature of the unity, if any, operative in the primitive Church and to evaluate the effect of that unity on the Church's corporate life.

⁴ W.A. Brown, Imperialistic Religion and the Religion of Democracy, chap. VI. Cf. his book Your Church and Mine, pp. 40ff.

⁵ Cf. J.H. Crooker, The Church of Tomorrow, p. 4; John Foster, World Church, pp. 35ff.

Such a study would not be utterly unrelated to the present situation; for the conviction has grown in the last few decades that only by appropriating the lessons from the past can the present problems of the Church be solved.

The way for a consideration of early Church unity has been paved by the careful research of German and British scholars over the last sixty years. As a result of their investigations two misconceptions have been removed. First to go was the idea, current since the sixth century, that the apostolic Church was relatively uniform in belief, practice, and organization.⁶ A careful comparison of our earliest documents reveals that this was far from the case. From the very beginning, as soon as daughter churches were established outside Jerusalem, divergences appeared. The second misconception was a corollary of the first, namely, that there was a time when there was no disunity. If we take as our norm of unity the hierarchical uniformity of the present day Roman Catholic Church, then it can be confidently asserted that the Church was never without disunity.

Does this mean, then, that the Church had no unity in its earliest period? Obviously, the answer must be a strong negative. For few facts are as well established as this: the first Christians were convinced that they

⁶ Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 108.

belonged to one single Church.⁷ Whether from Antioch, Jerusalem, Ephesus, or Rome they all felt themselves to be united in one great Christian Body which occupied in their thinking a place of priority over the particular congregation to which they happened to belong. What was the basis of this conviction? As we have seen, the answer to this question has been multiform, and the reason is not difficult to ascertain. There were many forces in the Church which contributed to its sense of solidarity. Many things were shared in common which served to bind them together.

During the early years they treasured a common memory - the memory of their Lord in His earthly life.⁸ What greater bond could there be than the precious recollections of Jesus' words, His miracles, the way He looked and spoke. For those who had known Him before His ascension, this would be an overwhelming interest in common. They also shared a common faith in Jesus,⁹ in the Kingdom He came to inaugurate, in the atoning significance of His death, and in the truth of His resurrection. Theirs was a common hope as well - the ἔσχατον,¹⁰ the

⁷ Cf. Ignatius, Smvr., 8; Victor, De alestoribus, 11 (Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. V, part I, p. 29); Tertullian, De poenitentia, 10; De pudicitia, 21; Apologia, 39; Praescrip. haer., 20; Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:24. For the unitive significance of ἀδελφότης in I Peter 2:17 and I Clement 2:4 vide T.M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, p. 21.

⁸ Luke 1:2; Acts 1:21ff.; I John 1:1-3.

⁹ Acts 2:14ff.; 3:12ff.; 12:17; 13:16ff.; I Cor. 15:3ff.; etc.

¹⁰ Rom. 13:12; I Cor. 15:24; II Cor. 4:14ff.; I Thess. 4:13ff.

consummation of the New Age, the glorious return of Christ to earth, and the final sanctification of the elect. The pagan world was particularly impressed by the common love believers had for one another.¹¹ Regardless of racial derivation, social caste, or sexual differentiation the Christians regarded with almost family affection all other adherents of the Faith. The cry, "How these Christians love one another!" came involuntarily to the lips of outsiders when they discovered the way even the poor and outcast were treated in the Church. For a time the Christians shared a common treasury,¹² and though this was not of long duration, communal offerings, ensured the care of the destitute and needy in each congregation. Perhaps most important of all, however, was the common meal - the holy Eucharist or Lord's Supper - which became the central act of corporate worship in the Church.¹³ In this sacrament each believer was united to his Lord and through Him with every other believer. Nothing could have done more to make concrete the unity of the Church, the one holy catholic Ecclesia of God.

While these are a few of the internal factors contributing to the Church's cohesion, there were many external ones as well. The unity of the Roman Empire with all its resultant advantages of strength and integrated

¹¹ I Peter 2:17; I John 2:9f.; 3:14; 4:7,8,11.

¹² Acts 2:44f.; 4:34ff.; I Cor. 16:1; II Cor. 9:6ff.

¹³ Acts 2:46; I Cor. 11:20-29.

activity served as a constant exemplar to the Church. The presence of itinerant missionaries, preachers, and prophets kept each congregation in loose contact with its neighbours.¹⁴ The custom of sending official delegates from one Church to another and the dissemination of apostolic epistles did much to strengthen this contact.¹⁵ The pax Romana insured safety and ease of travel, and wherever a Christian went he could be confident of willing hospitality in the homes of the local congregation.¹⁶ By this time the synoptic Gospels had reached most of the outlying churches and were used generally in the regular worship services. All of these elements contributed to a sense of catholicity that was heightened by the pressure of official censure and persecution from the Roman authorities.

These, then, are some of the causes for the unity of the early Church. But it must not be supposed that this exhausts the list. There were innumerable forces which in one form or another helped create solidarity. Does this imply, then, that there is no basic unifying factor, which, as it were, regulated all the others? No, that does not necessarily follow. It is, I believe, possible to point to one dominant factor and say, "Upon this rested

¹⁴ Acts 14:4,14; Rom. 16:7; I Cor. 12:28; 15:7; II Cor. 11:13; I Thess. 2:6; Rev. 2:2; Didache, XI.

¹⁵ II Cor. 8:18ff.; Eph. 6:21; Phil. 2:19,25; Col. 6:7; I Thess. 3:2.

¹⁶ I Cor. 1:11; 16:17; Heb. 13:23; III John 6.

the unity of the Christian Church." But (and this point cannot be overemphasized) it is necessary to associate that statement with a particular period in history. The confusion over this subject of unity has risen in part from the fact that it has been conceived as a static entity, like a proposition from Euclid or the date of some historical event. This is a fallacious assumption, for human institutions change and ideas gather about them new associations. The unity of the Church has never been a static condition, but is more in the nature of a progressive development.¹⁷ In accord with changing circumstances it has grown and developed to keep pace with the geographic and numerical expansion of the whole Body.

This does not mean to say that the unitive principle of the apostolic era, for instance, was later abandoned by subsequent ages or that, conversely, the unity of the Nicene period is not to be found in the primitive Church. The development of unity was not on this fashion. The chief unitive influences of the Church have always been present in every age. Their outward form may change somewhat, but essentially they remain the same. The evolution in this element of Church life has not been a history of discovery and subsequent abandonment, but rather it has

¹⁷ Bishop Gore hinted at this when he wrote, "It is characteristic of the Scriptural and fundamental idea of Church unity that it should be a progressive thing, progressing with a spiritual advance; not an external thing once for all imposed." The Church and the Ministry, p. 48, footnote #2. But he did not elaborate on the idea further.

consisted in a progressive shift of emphasis. Each period of the Church's existence has seen the emphasis placed on some particular principle around which the Christian community centred its life. The other principles of unity are there as well, but a priority is given one of them. The shift from one to another has been regulated either by logical inference (the normal and natural course derived from internal circumstances) or by historical necessity (the expedient course under the pressure of specific external events).

The specific nature of this investigation, then, becomes a study of the various unitive principles which governed the early Church and the reasons which prompted the succeeding shifts of emphasis. An examination of the first three centuries of Church history from this standpoint reveals that there were four periods in the life of the Church each one of which was regulated by a different basis of unity.¹⁸ For several reasons, it is impossible to assign exact chronological limits to the periods. In the first place, development of thought and circumstances of growth were not uniform throughout the Church. Local conditions prompted different reactions so that there was a wide diversity in belief and practice. Therefore, while certain parts of the Church were passing through period two, some parts were still living in period one and more progressive areas had already passed on to

¹⁸ Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, pp. 73-85.

period three. But even if the whole Church had been uniform, it would still be impossible to assign time limits to each period for, secondly, the periods overlapped to a great extent even within local areas.

With such reservations in mind, we turn to the question, what were these four basic unities? The answer lies in an understanding of the historical conditions out of which the Church arose. At its inception, the Church could not have been called an organization. The most that could be said is that it consisted of a loose fellowship, a fellowship of individuals united in a common allegiance to one Person. This was not a speculative or theoretical relationship but an intensely personal one. At the centre of the fellowship stood Jesus of Nazareth, a Man among men with whom the disciples had lived on the most intimate terms for several years. He it was whom they now proclaimed as risen Lord and Christ of God. It was from Him they drew their strength and inspiration; it was His Gospel they preached; and it was in His Name they worked their exorcisms and miracles of healing. Thus, it was Jesus who constituted the first essential unity of the Church.

It might be objected that Christ has always been the centre of His Church. Is He not its Head and Founder? Will He not be its Consummator and Judge? Has He not redeemed it by His sacrificial death? Yes, of course. But that does not obscure the fact that the relation of a modern Christian to Christ is very different from the relation enjoyed by the first disciples. Whereas today

Christ is conceived theologically, the Apostles thought of Him personally. Their minds were too full of the tremendous events they had witnessed to be overly concerned with abstractions. They preached a personal experience: "That . . . which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life."¹⁹

When the Church began to gain hundreds of converts, most of them had never met Jesus in the flesh. As a consequence, their knowledge of His life and teaching had to come from those who had known Him. Further, their ideas of Christ were largely influenced by the revelation of His divinity so that they thought of Him more as the glorified and exalted King than as the carpenter from Nazareth. Simultaneous with this shift in understanding Christ, the occurrence at Pentecost brought a new force into the life of the Church - the Holy Spirit. So dramatic was its activity in the Christian fellowship that possession of the Spirit soon became the hallmark of the ἐκλεκτός. From the record in Acts and the Pauline Epistles it is clear that all believers shared in this direct association with the Spirit. The humblest member of the Ecclesia could feel himself equal with the chief of the Apostles in this respect at least: they were led by the same Spirit. Hence, it was natural that the Spirit came to be recognized as the new functional unity of the Church. Not that it

¹⁹ I John 1:1. Cf. Appendix A.

displaced Christ; both were loved and worshipped and sometimes even identified. But as eyewitnesses of the Lord passed away, the only direct approach to Christ remaining to the Church was through the Holy Spirit.

During the initial enthusiasm of the Church, the manifestations of spiritual power were found among all Christians generally. But as the Church became established there was a noticeable drop in the number of those claiming or exhibiting special spiritual gifts. As impostors or charlatans posing as "prophets" brought discredit on the spiritual offices, the clergy assumed more and more power. In time it is possible that the shift away from the unity of the Spirit might have been accomplished without attracting any notice at all, but the even tenor of this evolution was interrupted by the emergence in Phrygia of a new sect known after its founder as Montanism. The Montanists tried to re-create the spiritual fervour that had been so characteristic of the early Church. It began, therefore, as a reforming movement with the intent of purging from the Church all secularism and worldliness. Though it had a considerable success at first and gained as its advocate no less a figure than Tertullian, the redoubtable Carthaginian ecclesiastic, Montanism failed to accomplish its aim and instead was denounced as a heresy.

What Montanism did do was to destroy the faith of all Catholic churchmen in extra-ecclesiastical spiritual manifestations. The unity of the Spirit came to an abrupt

end as the third Person of the Trinity was assigned a more innocuous if less imposing rôle in the life of the Church. As a substitute unity there were many, including the bishop of Rome, who felt that nothing less than an authoritarian hierarchy would avail to hold the Church together. There were others, nevertheless, who opposed such a rigid conception of the Church, and they proposed true doctrine as the unitive principle of Christendom. The most outspoken proponent of the latter view was Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons. Though few churchmen have been as passionately devoted to unity as he, still he saw the danger of too tight a control. To every question of belief and practice he posed the query, "Is it in accord with orthodox doctrine?" His norm of doctrine was the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church. The inclusion of the latter introduced difficulties, for what was to be done in the event that two equally ancient traditions disagreed? His answer was unequivocal: except on doctrinal issues which could be solved by recourse to Scripture alone, diverse practices backed by authentic traditions were equally valid.

The good Bishop of Lyons was doubtless satisfied with the validity of his argument and the wisdom of his stand. But subsequent churchmen did not altogether share his view. They felt that Scriptural doctrine was unable to stand alone as the unifying principle of the Church unless it was buttressed by a human representative of the divine authority. By this time the organized clergy were in firm control of all Church activities so there

was little opposition, at least in the West, to the erection of an authoritarian, strongly centralized Church. This constituted the fourth and final phase: Church unity became resident in the power of the episcopate which ultimately devolved into a coerced uniformity. If the Church said, "Now there abideth the Canon, the Creed, and the Bishop," it must needs conclude, "and the greatest of these is the Bishop."

In brief, then, it is the purpose of this dissertation to demonstrate the following propositions: First, that the unity of the Church, as illustrated by the first three centuries of its existence, is not a static condition but is more aptly described as a progressive development. Second, that there are discernible during this time four general periods each one of which was regulated by a different unity within the Church's corporate life. And lastly, that whereas all four unitive forces were present in each period, priority was given to one of them, and the change from one period to another was characterized by a shift in which a different unity was emphasized.

The method of approach will be largely chronological. Each major unity will be examined in the order of its priority, the reason for its adoption by the Church will be explained, an attempt will be made to understand the causes which led to a shift in emphasis and the inauguration of the next period, and finally, each unity will be evaluated for its effectiveness in promoting the cohesion and harmony of the Church.

Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND IN JUDAISM

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it
is for brethren to dwell together in
unity."¹

It can generally be demonstrated that all human institutions have a genetic relationship to previous institutions. Thus the history of human culture becomes a vast interlocking chain of social forces and a related whole. For that reason, it is impossible to understand any institution without first taking into consideration its spiritual antecedents and the place it occupies in relation to the whole stream of culture. This observation applies with especial force to a study of Church unity, for though as a divine institution the Church transcends the cultural chain, it is also human and therefore deeply rooted in history.

When the Church was founded in Jerusalem, the spiritual life of the Roman Empire was in a state of profound unrest. Old religious convictions were breaking down, and in their place came a plethora of cults and esoteric religions loosely designated as the mystery religions. The Pax Romana fostered the interchange of ideas through the Empire so that philosophic thought aroused men everywhere to a new struggle with the problems of being, of evil, and of the Good. All of these

¹ Psalm 133:1.

new philosophies and religions had some effect on the infant Christian Church, but on the whole, it was negligible when compared to the debt the Church owed to the religion from which it sprang - the religion of the Jews. A logical starting point, therefore, of this investigation is an examination of Judaism at the time of Christ with especial reference to its unity.

Of all the subject peoples ruled by Rome, none remained so distinct and so true to its beliefs as the Jews. Endowed with a passionately religious nature, devout in the observance of the customs of their forefathers, and endowed with special privileges under Roman law, the Jews occupied a truly unique place in the Empire. No matter how far from Palestine they wandered, or how few in numbers they might be, they remained aloof from the general populace and lived a life of relative separation from their Gentile neighbours, insofar as that was practical or possible. What formed the basis of this sense of unity which held the Jews together, even though they were scattered all over the world? The answer lies in three directions: faith in God, adherence to the Temple worship, and observance of the Law. All three of these had a profound effect on the Christian Church, so they warrant closer investigation.

More than any other single belief, it was the Jewish idea of God that lay at the root of Judaism's strong solidarity. Almost every element of the cultus can be traced back directly to this concept of God. Certainly

here is the really distinctive feature in the Jewish history and religion. The author of the Pentateuch revealed God's will for the nation; the Psalmist extolled God's mercy and care; the prophets proclaimed His judgment on sin and disobedience. Thus there grew up a strong feeling of personal relationship between God and His people. The first and basic attribute of this God Israel worshipped was His unity. In the simplest and also the greatest of Jewish affirmations, the Shema, it is the unity of God which is first proclaimed: "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is One."² Also, in the first commandment is the injunction to "have no other gods before Me."³ - a direct assertion of God's unity. In the Morning Service of the synagogue, the following act of praise illustrates the depth to which the idea penetrated the whole Jewish system:

Magnified and praised be the living God. He is, and there is no limit in time unto His being. He is One, and there is no unity like unto His Unity; inconceivable is He, and unending in His Unity. He hath neither bodily form nor substance: we can compare nought unto Him in His holiness. He was before anything that hath been created, even the first; but His existence had no beginning.⁴

² Deuteronomy 6:4.

³ Exod. 20:3. Cf. also Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; Isa. 44:6; 45:5; 46:9; etc.

⁴ Quoted by Box & Oesterley, The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue, p. 158.

As recorded in the Old Testament, Israel's history is the process by which God impressed upon His people this essential fact of unity. From idolatry through calamity to reform, the melancholy story is repeated over and over again, until the last great captivity finally made this truth so much a part of Jewish faith that it was well-nigh ineradicable. Everything possible was done to remind the Jew of his faith and allegiance. The mazzah built into the doorpost of the home, the parchment bearing the Shema bound to the arm and forehead of the pious served as a constant reminder and admonition - "God is One." This uncompromising monotheism, more than anything else, demarcated the Jew from the Gentile world. With easy tolerance, Rome accepted the deities of conquered peoples and incorporated them into the universal pantheon. Thus polytheism not only had Imperial sanction but was actually encouraged.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that the Jews were hated, despised, and often persecuted for their refusal to conform to the popular belief. As a result, the Jewish community was more strongly welded into a homogeneous unit than might otherwise have been the case. Opposition only strengthened their faith and deepened their sense of oneness. For their ability to endure persecution was dependent on another conviction: not only was God One, but He had chosen them as His special people, His own nation.⁵ Despite national calamities,

⁵ Leut. 7:6-11; 10:15; 32:8f. Cf. G.F. Moore, Judaism, vol. I, pp. 226ff. & 357ff. "The Idea of God."

war, death, captivity, and ultimate dispersal over the world, this one idea gave them courage and confidence. The Absolute Authority of the universe had elected them to be His witnesses before the nations. National calamity, so the prophets asseverated, was not due to the greed of powerful neighbours nor to the caprice of history or geography but to the vengeance of a just God for His people's sin and apostasy.⁶ Further, the prophets were confident that no matter how severe the judgment upon Israel, there would always be a remnant which would be led by God's Messiah to establish the great Kingdom.⁷

The peculiar relation between God and Israel gave the Jews a strong sense of mission. Their lives were to be kept pure and their worship in strict accord with the Law in order that God's Holy Name might be glorified before the heathen. To maintain this purity, they avoided contact with the Gentile world as much as possible and thus became to a large degree a self-sufficient community within the community. Proselytes were not gained so much by missionary activity as by the silent witness of pure living in the midst of decadence and moral corruption. It is true that there were a number of distinct sects within Judaism, especially in Palestine, but their

⁶ Isa. 1:4; 5:24f; 29; Jer. 4:20f; 16:10f; Ezek. 14:6ff; 17:19f.

⁷ II Kings 19:30f; Ezra 9:8; Isa. 10:20f; 51:11; Jer. 23:3; Ezek. 6:8f; etc.

differences were never allowed to destroy the unity of Israel. Even as God is a Unity, so His people should be united.⁸ By a solemn covenant at Sinai, God had bound the people to Himself for the observance of His holy laws and nothing must be allowed to break that relationship. From that time forth, He was to be their God, and they were to be His people - all of them.⁹

Even this, however, is not the full Hebraic conception of God. As a corollary to the belief that Israel is the chosen people of God lies the belief that God is Lord of the whole world.¹⁰ He created the world and all things belong to Him.¹¹ Though He is distinct from the world, He is in all things, places, and times¹² and yet remains unchangeable and imperishable.¹³ Though the Gentiles do not know Him and have sinned grievously against Him, He will judge them as well as Israel for He searches and knows the innermost thoughts and motives of man's being.¹⁴ The qualities of the Almighty made the Jew feel secure. Had not God, the Lord of heaven and earth, deigned to make His habitation among His people? Was not

⁸ Cf. Box & Oesterley, Op. cit., p. 163ff.

⁹ Isa. 51:16; Jer. 24:7; 31:1; 32:38; Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; Zech. 8:8.

¹⁰ Isa. 2:2-4; 19:18-25; 56:6-8; Zech. 2:11; 14:9; Mal. 1:11.

¹¹ Gen. 1:1; II Kings 19:15; Psalm 33:6,9; 89:11.

¹² Psalm 139:7-12.

¹³ Isa. 41:4; 51:12f; Mal. 3:6.

¹⁴ Psalm 139:1-4; Jer. 16:17; 17:10; 23:24.

Zion His holy hill, the Temple the place where He had caused His Name to dwell? No matter how severe the persecution or how dreadful the calamity, he was confident that God would not completely destroy His people, and ultimately the Israel of God would take its rightful place of primacy among the nations.¹⁵

Finally, one further attribute of God which contributed to the solidarity of Judaism was His holiness. God's treatment of His people was conditioned not by irresponsible whim and fancy, as was the case with pagan deities, but by His flawless holiness. The idea of "holy" was at first probably only a synonym for divine as contrasted with human. It was the quality of separatedness which kept mortals from approaching too close to Him (e.g. Exod. 19:12f), and spelled death for those who stepped beyond the prescribed limits. Slowly, however, the term took on the connotation of moral exaltedness and purity and the "sum total of ethical excellence characteristic of Jahweh."¹⁶ It was this quality of God's character which determined His purpose in history - the redemption of mankind. To accomplish this purpose, Israel had been chosen as the chief agent of God. Through a long and tortuous history, the Jews had been educated to become a people apart and holy unto the Lord.¹⁷ This accounted for

¹⁵ Cf. E.G. Hirsch, "God", JE, vol. 6, p. 1.

¹⁶ W.T. Davison, "God (Biblical and Christian)", HERE, vol. 6, p. 254.

¹⁷ Exodus 19:6.

the severe trials the Jews were called upon to face. As God's example before the Gentiles, they had to maintain a high standard of ethical and ceremonial purity. When they abandoned this standard, God's judgment was rapid and merciless.

At the same time, these identical judgments convinced the Jews of their special place in history and strengthened their resolve to follow the commands of their God. They were inspired with a passion for personal holiness which made them shun overmuch contact with their Gentile neighbours and served as a strong bond of internal unity within their own fellowship.

It was this well-developed idea of God which the early Church inherited. For the most part, the early Christians accepted it without modification, except insofar as it was further developed by the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. Of course this was natural at the outset for all the earliest Christians were Jews strongly rooted in the Jewish faith and worship. But even when the Gentile converts began to gain the ascendancy in the Church, these cardinal ideas of God continued in their faith and operated toward the solidarity of the Church even as it had for the non-Christian Jews. In fact it was the idea of God which proved the strongest link between Christianity and Judaism, just as it was the Person of Christ which proved the greatest point of division. This sense of continuity has been well

expressed thus:

From an early date this body of Christians, united into one in Christ through the Spirit, was called ecclesia, church. This was the name used by preference in the Septuagint for the assembly of the Children of Israel. When the Christians applied this title to their own society, they expressed thereby their consciousness of being the chosen people of God, the people of the Old Testament who had received the promises; they believed themselves to be the spiritual Israel.¹⁸

Just how important this doctrine of God was for the unity of the infant Church is not readily perceived until the results of its denial are seen. It became evident first when Marcion set about to purge Christianity of all its Jewish elements. He rejected the Old Testament and its teaching and built up a system of faith based entirely on the life and sayings of Jesus. As a result he lost:

. . . monotheism and all sense of unity and purpose in this world and in human history. His Jesus is no longer a live being of flesh and blood, for the flesh and blood of Jesus was Jewish, and Marcion would have none of it. His system is a sort of triangular duel between Matter, heartless Law, and non-natural Grace, a religion which has no contact with family life in this

¹⁸ Hans Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, p. 65.

world. . . .¹⁹

Such a radical excision of Christianity soon resulted in a destruction of that which it sought to purify, and the rest of orthodox Christianity recognized this fact by pronouncing Marcion's attempt heretical. Other than that, there was no serious attempt to deny the debt of the Church to the God of Israel.²⁰ On the contrary, by claiming Israel's God as her own and proclaiming herself as the new spiritual Israel, the Church sought to disinherit the Jews. If God had but one holy people, Israel, and if that Israel were the Church, then the Jews could no longer claim their peculiar relation to God. Thus the Church, even from the first, capitalized on those characteristics in the Jewish doctrine of God which served to unite and strengthen the diverse elements within it.

While this distinctive belief in God provided the spiritual unity for all Judaism, the Temple at Jerusalem and its ritual worship provided a geographical unity. Whether in Palestine itself or in settlements located far from the Holy Land, all devout Jews felt their focal

¹⁹ F.C. Burkitt, "The Debt of Christianity to Judaism," The Legacy of Israel, p. 80. Dr. Burkitt goes on to say: "And with this [the historicity of the Old Testament] is bound up the impassioned utterances of Prophets and Psalmists, who amid much that was admittedly obscure were constant in their insistence that God, the One true God, had chosen Israel, but only that Israel might exhibit justice and mercy. It was not only Jesus who considered that love of God and neighbor was a compendium of the Law and Prophets."

²⁰ With the exception, of course, of the Gnostic heresies. Vide infra chapter IV.

point to be Mount Zion, the Hill of the Lord. "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart."²¹ Every male was expected to make at least one pilgrimage to Jerusalem in his lifetime to take his offerings to the Temple. Both by the words of Scripture and by the exhortations of rabbis, the Jews were made to feel that only in Palestine could they call themselves really at home:

How shall I sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.²²

And the reason for this was that only while resident there could they take their full share in the Temple cultus.

Though this belief was present from the time of David's united kingdom, its importance was not stressed until after the captivity. From that time onward it is probable a good percentage of Judaism was located outside the boundaries of the Holy Land. Unfortunately, the state of the Jewish Diaspora from the Return up to the period of the Maccabees is shrouded in mystery. It is

²¹ Psalm 15:1f. Cf. 24:3; Isa. 2:2-6; 40:9.

²² Psalm 137:4-6.

certain that a large number of Jews did not take part in the Return. Their descendants doubtless continued to form a large Jewish population in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Though many in time mingled with the indigenous population and thus lost their distinctive characteristics, many continued the customs and observances of their faith. There is little doubt that they formed the oldest portion of the Diaspora. But into what other lands the Jews wandered, when they came, and in what numbers cannot be ascertained with any exactitude.

Communities of other orientals, Phoenicians and Egyptians, are known to have existed in the Greek commercial centers of Athens and Delos before the Maccabean era. They were in Athens as early as the fourth century B.C., and it is possible to infer a similar community of Jews gathering there, but no definite evidence is available.²³ Clearchus of Soli, a disciple of Aristotle, introduces into one of his dialogues a "Jew of Coele-Syria . . . [who] not only spoke Greek, but had the soul of a Greek."²⁴ In Egypt the papyri prove the presence of Jews and Samaritans under the earlier Ptolemies in large enough numbers to have villages composed predominantly of them.²⁵ In the days of Judas Maccabeus, there were groups of Jews settled in what was then pagan Galilee

²³ Edwyn Bevan, The House of Seleucus, vol. III, pp. 165f.

²⁴ Josephus, Contra Apion, I:176. Ἑλληνικὸς ᾧν οὐ τῇ διαλέκτῳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ ψυχῇ.

²⁵ Cf. Schürer, History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, vol. III, pp. 23f.

and Trans-Jordania, but they were small enough to be capable of being transported en masse to Judaea.²⁶

There is no doubt, however, of the existence of large, well-established communities of Jews through-out every province of the Roman Empire after the period of the Maccabees. Numbering, it has been estimated, as many as six or seven million souls,²⁷ this vast and wide-flung race of people were welded into a single unit more strongly than at any subsequent period, largely because of their common allegiance to the Temple and its worship. The effect of this great centralising influence is shown by the unanimity with which the Jewish communities reacted to the preaching of Paul. Almost everywhere Paul went he encountered Jerusalem-inspired opposition. In every remote community Jews were constantly reminded of their common nationality by the bonds which united them to the Temple in Jerusalem, as for example the annual Temple tax and the letters sent out by the Sanhedrin to the synagogues of the Diaspora from time to time.

Ever since the time of Solomon's temple, both the king of Judah and the priestly class had bent every effort to make all the Jews recognize the Temple as the center of the religious cult. This endeavor was met with varying

²⁶ Bevan, Op. cit., vol. III, p. 165.

²⁷ Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, p. 159.

success, but even at the best, only a small part of the people in Palestine actually acknowledged the Temple as their authority in all religious matters. Not until after the Captivity did the Temple assume a truly unifying position. Its authority was further strengthened by the inclusion of the Priestly Code within the canon of Scripture, and its practices were made normative for all Israel. With the conquest of Palestine by Rome, the Jewish cult faced severe restrictions, but the Romans soon discovered the fanatical zeal of the Jews with respect to their religious observances, so in the interests of peace and order they allowed the Jewish people many privileges of toleration. They were exempted from emperor-worship and were permitted instead to show their loyalty by prayers for their rulers.²⁸ They were allowed free association in their synagogues, were not required to fight on the Sabbath, and were even given wide freedom in self-government. In most large cities such as Alexandria or Rome the Jews had their own quarters, their own ethnarch and even their own legal courts. The local council or gerousia was responsible for order and collected both the Roman taxes and the temple tax for Jerusalem. The decisions of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin were carried out by the local synagogues, thus keeping their national identity intact despite wide dispersal through the Empire.²⁹

²⁸ Cf. Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. II, pp 257ff.

²⁹ Cf. Johnston, The Church in the New Testament, p. 15. For Jewish life in the early Empire, cf. Philo, In Flaccum; Josephus, Ant., XIV:10f; XVI:6ff.

The Temple itself underwent a marked change. The rather small structure built after the return from the Captivity was rebuilt and greatly expanded by Herod the Great. No expense was spared in making it one of the most beautiful and imposing edifices in the world.³⁰ Into its coffers poured a stream of gold from the Temple tax and voluntary giving on a large scale. The controlled sale of sacrificial animals and the exchange of currency also proved to be profitable sources of income and made possible the support of many hundreds of priests and Levites. Though the Temple involved an enormous financial burden to Jewry, and the accusation of greed on the part of the priesthood was not without considerable foundation, the average Jew bore his responsibility gladly. He took a tremendous pride in his religion and especially in its visible center, the Temple. The very Temple worship gave him a sense of profound superiority as he went through the Aikanor gates from the court of the Gentiles, beyond which no heathen could go upon pain of death. He could point with pride to a liturgical service and sacrificial system that stretched back hundreds of years before Rome was born, and it helped to develop within him a resource of strength that made him impervious to the persecution, hatred, and scorn with which he was visited in the Empire.

The obligation to visit Jerusalem in person was taken seriously by nearly all Jews. Those unable to

³⁰ For a description see Josephus, BJ, V:5 and Ant., XV:11:3. Cf. Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, pp. 5f.

make the trip with any frequency because they lived a long distance from Palestine tried to go at least once a lifetime, and those closer at hand went oftener, frequently the prescribed three times a year. The huge crowds that assembled in Jerusalem at the time of their religious festivals bears eloquent testimony to the hold the Temple worship had on the people. Up to the Holy City they streamed with their sacrifices and offerings, and home they returned strengthened in their devotion to their faith and filled with a new consciousness of national unity.³¹

This devotion to the Temple and its worship did not arise automatically or by chance. Back of it lay centuries of teaching by priests and rulers of the centrality of the Temple and its claims upon the individual. To achieve this geographical unity, the Temple worship was greatly elaborated, the priesthood became increasingly exclusive with membership based entirely upon heredity and blood relationship.³² Though both priests and Levites were presumably descended from Levi, the former came from Aaron and the house of Zadok. It is not known how early a distinction was made between the two,

³¹ ". . . Jerusalem was the heart of the whole system of the Dispersion. . . . After the Jewish war the Roman Government, realising how great was the danger of Jerusalem becoming a center of disaffection, prohibited the Jews from approaching the city, and the erection of the purely Gentile city of Aelia Capitolina by Hadrian was proof of the seriousness of their apprehension." Foakes-Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, p. 163.

³² Cf. Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. I, pp. 207ff.

perhaps as late as the time of Ezekiel,³³ though from the time of the Return, it became greatly emphasized. To preserve the blood purity of the priesthood, elaborate rules of marriage were instituted. A priest could marry only a virgin of Israel whose racial purity was unquestioned and who had no bodily defect. The priests themselves had to be free from all physical blemishes. In order to organize the vast number of priests and carry out the services of the Temple in an orderly manner, all the priests were divided by families into twenty-four courses, each course being responsible for the services of a particular day. Soon some of the courses became more influential than others, especially those domiciled in Jerusalem as contrasted with the priests who lived in the country districts round about. From the few important priestly families in Jerusalem, the high priest was almost invariably chosen, which served to increase the social differences already found within the priesthood.

This distinction led to the emergence of a religious party in Judaism at the time of Christ known as the Sadducees. The origin of the name is obscure, the most plausible derivation being from Zadok whom Solomon made chief priest in the place of Abiathar.³⁴ Most of the priests in the restoration Temple claimed to trace their

³³ According to Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. I, p. 223.

³⁴ I Kings 2:35. Though this is the most generally accepted derivation, other theories have been advanced, notably, T.W. Manson, Sadducee and Pharisee: the Origin and Significance of the Names.

ancestry to this Zadok. The Sadducees were of the influential priestly class who for the most part were wealthy, high socially, and conservative in their theology. They denied the authority of the Tradition and held only to the ordinances of the written Law. Further, they denied the existence of a spirit world, of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal life - doctrines commonly accepted by the masses and taught by the Pharisees.³⁵ It would be a mistake to suppose, however, that it was doctrine which primarily set apart the Sadducees from the other Jews. As a matter of fact, doctrine had a relatively unimportant part to play in the sect. Its important characteristic was social position.³⁶ As priests whose security and affluence depended on the primacy of the Temple worship, they were ceaseless in their efforts to exalt the Temple as the central unity of Judaism. While they were considered by the other religious leaders (including Jesus) to be rather tepid theologically, they were punctilious in the observance of the rituals of their office. Many of them had received a good Hellenistic education and almost without exception they resisted the strong nationalistic ferment which threatened to provoke a clash with Rome. They believed, quite honestly, that the continuance of their national existence and especially

³⁵ For further treatment on the Sadducees vide G. F. Moore, Judaism, vol. I, pp. 67-70 and the articles in HERE and JE.

³⁶ Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. II, pp. 29ff.

the Temple cultus depended on cooperation with their conquerors. Hence the willingness of Rome to have a Sadducee remain on the high priest's throne.

But despite their powerful backing, the Sadducees proved unable to stem the tide of popular opinion, and revolt broke out, at first sporadically and then in a general uprising which brought on the war of 66 to 70 A.D. in which Jerusalem was completely destroyed. The result was extinction of the Sadducees as a party.³⁷ The end of the Holy City might have been the death-blow to Judaism had its only unity been a geographical one, centering at Jerusalem. But such did not prove to be the case. Long before this another allegiance had gripped the people, and it now took the place of the Temple worship after the latter had been destroyed. The unity was the Law as enshrined in the synagogue.

For generations there had been a gradual neutralizing of the sacrificial system proceeding apace within the inner life of Judaism - even among the Pharisees; and this

³⁷ "With the fall of the Jewish State, the Sadducees altogether disappear from history. Their strong point was politics. When deprived of this, their last hour had struck. While the Pharisaic party only gained more strength, only obtained more absolute rule over the Jewish people in consequence of the collapse of political affairs, the very ground on which they stood was cut away from the Sadducees. Hence, it is not to be wondered, that Jewish scholars soon no longer even knew who the Sadducees really were. In the Mishna we still find some trustworthy traditions concerning them; but the Talmudic period, properly so-called, has but a very misty notion of them." Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. II, pp. 42f.

coincided with an historical situation which obliged by far the greater number of the adherents of the religion to live amid conditions which had made them strangers for a long period to the sacrificial system. In this way they were also rendered accessible on every side of their spiritual nature to foreign cults and philosophies, and thus there originated Persian and Graeco-Jewish religious alloys, several of whose phenomena threatened even the monotheistic belief. The destruction of the Temple by the Romans really destroyed nothing; it may be viewed as an incident organic to the history of Jewish religion. When pious people held God's ways at that crisis were incomprehensible, they were but deluding themselves.³⁸

Ever since the exile and the rise of the Diaspora, the synagogue had slowly begun to take precedence over the Temple. Paralleling this was a similar shift away from the sacrificial system to personal holiness and enshrining of the Law. Foakes-Jackson and Lake find an interesting suggestion of this in the Sibylline Oracles "where it is said that the great God has no temple of stone nor altars defiled by the blood of animals. The reference is of course primarily to heathen sacrifice,

³⁸ Adolf Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 10f. While the wording of this statement is more extreme than can be historically justified, it serves to indicate how far the shift from adherence to the Temple over to adherence to the Law as the ultimate unity had progressed in 70 A.D. It should further be noted that it was the resistance to pagan cults and philosophies which constituted the united strength of the Diaspora Judaism rather than a watered-down eclectic religion as Harnack seems to suggest. Cf. in this connection Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, pp. 162f.

but its tendency is unmistakable."³⁹

Just as Judaism slowly turned away from the Temple to the Law even before the destruction of the former, so early Christianity soon departed from the Temple worship. This was facilitated by the words of Jesus Himself. The prediction He made of the destruction of the Temple showed that the Temple worship was not central in His teaching and by implication at least taught His ultimate independence of it. (Luke 19:41-44 and 21:5,6). This was, in fact, explicitly stated in the conversation with the woman of Samaria: "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father." (John 4:21).

At first the Jewish-Christian converts in Jerusalem faithfully continued their attendance upon the Temple services, But as Christianity spread outside Jerusalem and even outside Palestine, it soon became apparent that the old cultic practice was no longer necessary in the new religion. Following the Second Council of Jerusalem, the Temple was abandoned altogether as necessary to the Christian faith, and so it soon lost its hold on the new converts. While the geographic, earthly unity of Judaism was thus rejected by Christianity, the latter clung ever more closely to its historical continuity with the past. It claimed to be one with ancient Israel,⁴⁰ the

³⁹ Sibylline Oracles, IV:8ff and 24ff as cited in EC, vol. I, pp. 92f. Cf. trans. and notes of R.H. Charles, Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha, vol. II, pp. 393f.

⁴⁰ Cf. Psalm 74:2.

possessor of the Promise and the inheritor of the Covenant relationship. But this, after all, was very different from the relationship so jealously guarded by the priestly class. To the Sadducees, the true Israel of God was a people bound together by blood ties and sealed with the sign of circumcision. To the Christians, on the contrary, Israel was a people united to God through spiritual rebirth and obedience to His will. So it can be seen that the rejection of the Temple and its claims by the Christians was practically complete.

There remained still another unitive force, which in the end proved even more effective in keeping Judaism true to its faith than the other two. This was the synagogue. After the exile, the Law loomed ever larger in Jewish religious life, for it stood as the symbol and proof that theirs was a revealed religion. God had not only made Himself known to men, but had given men a complete body of statutes and regulations for the direction of man's entire life and the attainment of salvation. Further, it was the Law which gave them the proof of their truly unique position among the nations. They were the people of God, the chosen race, beloved of God.⁴¹ It was on their behalf that the world had been created.⁴² They were called to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the saints of the Most High, bearing witness to

⁴¹ II Baruch 48:20 and IV Ezra 5:33f.

⁴² Assumption of Moses 1:12. Cf. Shepherd of Hermas, Visions, II:4:1.

Him before the heathen.⁴³ God's service as revealed in the Law was the life-blood of the nation.⁴⁴

The unique value of the Law lay in the fact that it was directly inspired by God and therefore accurately mirrored His will. When the need for this written authority was first felt, at the time of the exile, there was no question about the authenticity of the Pentateuch or of a good many of the prophetic writings. For generations they had been used in the services of worship and for the instruction of the congregation. The rest of the canon took shape slowly and was subsumed under the rather indefinite title "The Writings." The total collection - Law, Prophets, and Writings - then became normative for the Jewish community. As prophetic inspiration gradually died out, God's will had to be sought in His revealed Scriptures, and so it became imperative for each Jew to acquaint himself thoroughly with their contents.⁴⁵

With the scattering of Jewry throughout the civilized world after the exile, a distinction had to be made between those living in Palestine who could fulfill the Law completely and those living in other parts of the Empire who were unable to participate in the sacrificial system of the Temple worship. Those in the Diaspora who

⁴³ Psalms of Solomon 17:23ff. Cf. Deut. 26:19; Isa. 43:3f.; Jer. 2:3; Dan. 7.

⁴⁴ Cf. further, Moore, Judaism, vol. I, p. 235 and Johnston, The Church in the New Testament, p. 24f.

⁴⁵ For discussion of the canon, cf. Moore, Op. cit., vol. I, pp. 240ff.

could but partially fulfill the Law felt the necessity of being especially meticulous about observing what they could. It became the supreme duty of every Jew to know the Law and to observe it completely. Religion became a much more personal matter than a mass reliance on the ministrations of priests. So there arose a tremendous educational system which had no parallel in all heathen antiquity. Even Philo, with all his liberal platonising tendencies, showed no encouragement for those Jews who were lax in regard to their legal obligations.⁴⁶ The children were required to learn the Scriptures from infancy.⁴⁷ Even before the legal age, they were urged to participate in the great national festivals and fasts such as the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement. In order to maintain the ritualistic purity of their faith, Jews kept as aloof from the Gentiles as possible, as is seen repeatedly throughout the Pauline Epistles and Acts. This separation from the world to observe the Law served also to unite them more strongly one to another.⁴⁸

Much has been made by Gentile writers of the ridiculous lengths to which ceremonial observance of the Law was taken. So stringent were the restrictions and so multifarious the requirements of the Law, it would seem

⁴⁶ Philo, De somniis, II:18.

⁴⁷ As, for example, Timothy, the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish mother. Acts 16:1; II Tim. 3:15.

⁴⁸ Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, pp. 83f., 162f.

to be a crushing burden for any people. Yet it was not so considered by those who had to bear it. The Law became the sign of God's love for them, and hence it seemed not a burden but a glory.

To those who did not love Him, the rules might be a burden or a nuisance, inexplicable ordinances of an omnipotent Deity, whose odd and freakish commands must be sadly obeyed lest worse should befall. But to lovers every order of the Beloved is dear: in gladness and delight are His injunctions fulfilled. No more characteristic Rabbinic phrase exists than that of the "Joy of the Commandments": Simhah shel Misvah.⁴⁹

Nothing can prove this more effectively than the universal espousal of the Law by the Diaspora. The contact with the heathen world in far-flung corners of the Empire, instead of encouraging the Jews to throw off their legal restrictions and adopt the customs of their neighbours, only strengthened them in their love for God's commands and deepened the gulf which separated them from the Gentiles. It was as though they felt the dangers of slow assimilation into heathendom and sought to prevent it by the most rigorous observance of the Law's requirements.

The results of this had profound repercussions on Judaism as a whole and probably insured its perpetuation after the destruction of the Temple. Whereas the religion was sacerdotal and aristocratic in Jerusalem, it became

⁴⁹ Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, pp. 59f.

personal and democratic in the Diaspora. There was a tendency to ignore distinctions of rank among the Israelites and to accept all on their personal merits alone. With this increased emphasis on the Law came a demand for greater learning, since it was obviously impossible to keep the commandments without having a thorough knowledge of what they were. So religion and education went hand in hand. In time there arose an aristocracy, not of blood but of learning. It was distinguished from the priestly aristocracy by being open to all so that a proselyte, like Aquila, or an unlettered peasant, like Akiba, could with study and effort be accepted into its foremost ranks. It was a position held by merit alone - even the high priest might be excluded because of ignorance.⁵⁰

It was from this group, perhaps even before the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, there arose the party of the Pharisees. In all probability, they were the successors to the *Hasidim*, the "Pure Ones," a group of conservative Jews who played such an important rôle in the Maccabean wars. At all events, the Pharisees attempted to realize to the full the ideal of legal purity and so were fully occupied with interpreting and supplementing the Law. Largely through their efforts there arose the great corpus of oral tradition or Halakah which was far more stringent, even, than the Law. It was the belief of the Pharisees, which they diligently propagated, that

⁵⁰ Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, p. 125.

should all the Jews obey the Law perfectly, even for a day, the Messiah would come and usher in the Messianic kingdom. They saw their task, then, as being two-fold: to teach the Law to all who did not know it, and to interpret it in such a way that it would meet every conceivable situation.⁵¹ In their zeal for complete ceremonial purity, they withdrew from contact with all possible sources of contamination, including their less informed fellow countrymen. To this may be attributed the probable derivation of their name - the "separated ones." They are first mentioned by Josephus in the war between Jonathan and Demetrius.⁵² Later they reappear in the struggle of John Hyrcanus.⁵³ From then on, they grew rapidly in power, if not in numbers, until they, rather than the priests, were acknowledged as the ultimate authorities on the Law.

Closely associated with the Pharisees and antedating them was a guild of scholars known as the Scribes. Their principal task was making copies of the sacred Scriptures, a work demanding the utmost exactness and fidelity to detail. Far more was demanded of the Scribes than the ability to read and write. They, too, had to be well versed in all the subtleties of the Law and show evidence of scholarly attainments before they were permitted

⁵¹ Cf. Edwyn Bevan, Jerusalem Under the High Priests, p. 121ff.

⁵² Josephus, Ant., XIII:5:9.

⁵³ Ibid., XIII:10:5f. Cf. Moore, Judaism, vol. I, pp. 37ff., 56ff.

to make a copy of the Scriptures for use in public worship. It was from the ranks of the Scribes and Pharisees that there came the Rabbis, or teachers. These latter were to wield a profound influence over the people, exceeding even the authority of the priests at Jerusalem. Like the Scribes and Pharisees, it was a position obtainable on personal merit and scholarship alone. Rich and poor alike, though more often than not the latter, could attain the distinction. Many were artisans or manual labourers in addition to their teaching profession, for it was "forbidden to make a livelihood out of the Law."⁵⁴ Though some were well-to-do and some even wealthy, they were no more esteemed than the poor. It was a true aristocracy of knowledge which precluded any aristocracy of wealth. So high a value was placed on scholarship that it became universally recognized and honoured. Any family was proud to claim a Rabbi as a son. Yet the actual authority and power of the Rabbi was quite limited. He did not exercise any priestly function, administer any sacrament or dispense salvation. Only by personal effort alone could the favour of God be won, and the only function of the Rabbi was to explain the Law which charted the way.

Yet, though the Rabbi had little actual authority, his influence was enormous. The people followed him in all that he said; his words were memorized faithfully by

⁵⁴ Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, p. 74.

his pupils. Even the high priest and the powerful priestly party of the Sadducees did not dare to offend the Rabbis openly, as Paul well knew when he stood trial for his life in Jerusalem.⁵⁵ While only those living near the Temple could attend the sacrifices with any regularity, the Rabbis conducted services of worship and instruction wherever ten male Jews could be assembled. They were the recognized leaders in what became the central Jewish institution of worship - the synagogue.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the synagogue was the salvation of Judaism at the time the Temple was destroyed..A brief comparison of the two institutions is sufficient to indicate the strength of the former.⁵⁶ There was only one Temple, located at Jerusalem, so participation in its services was a limited privilege for those living at any distance away. The synagogue, on the other hand, was an omnipresent institution wherever a small colony of Jews lived. To organize a congregation, all that was needed was ten male Jews of adult age. Therefore, all but a few isolated Jewish traders were within easy distance of a synagogue anywhere in the Empire. The Temple tended to be associated with a highly complex ritual and liturgy conducted by a small group of professional priests and paid employees. But the synagogue service remained essentially simple, and there

⁵⁵ Acts 23:6ff.

⁵⁶ Vide G.H. Box, "Worship (Hebrew)," HERE, vol. 12, p. 794.

was a maximum of congregational participation. The chief emphasis at the Temple was sacrifice, while the synagogue existed primarily for the purpose of instruction and edification and prayer. For this reason the synagogue service gave the worshipper the greater sense of personal relevance. The leaders of the Temple worship were the priests, an aristocracy based on heredity and occupying a position of wealth and high social prestige. On the other hand, the synagogue was conducted in a quite democratic manner. Its positions of leadership were open to all who had the ability to occupy them acceptably. So, as a rule, the synagogue leaders came from the body of the congregation by popular vote. As has already been noted, the Temple worship was associated with the Sadducean party which had gained the distrust of the people through temporizing with Rome. The synagogue, meanwhile, was identified with the popular and greatly revered party of the Pharisees.

It was the synagogue in each community which served to unite the Jews resident there. It received messages from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and thus acted as a connecting link with the rest of the Diaspora and the Jews in Palestine. It provided the normal meeting place where travellers could meet the local inhabitants and share with them what news they brought. Paul's consistent use of the synagogue as his base of operations or point of departure in a city bespeaks its value in this connection.

The origin of the synagogue, like so many Jewish

institutions, is shrouded in obscurity. The earliest record of a Jewish colony outside Palestine is of the colony at Yeb (Elephantine) in Egypt. It had a temple and altar of its own, and there is a reference in the Mond Papyri that Cambysee (528-521 B.C.) spared the temple when he conquered the country.⁵⁷ There is a possible reference to the synagogue in Psalm 74:8, which has been assigned to the Maccabean period. The words יְהוָה יִשְׁכְּנֵם may be translated "synagogues of God" as the Authorized Version does, but this is not certain. The most likely conjecture is that it arose early in the Captivity as a necessary substitute for the Temple at Jerusalem.⁵⁸ The word is used very seldom by Philo and Josephus. Philo uses it only once when he says the Essenes come to holy places called synagogues.⁵⁹ Twice he uses συναγωγίον,⁶⁰ and twice προσευκτήριον,⁶¹ but he usually prefers προσευχή. Josephus seems to prefer ἐκκλησία to the less classical συναγωγή, though he

⁵⁷ Vide reference in BC, vol. I, pp. 160f.

⁵⁸ So Moore, Judaism, vol. I, p. 281 and Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. II, p. 52ff. "Though the rabbis could not imagine the religion without its synagogue, there is no reason to suppose that it is older than the exile." A.C. Welch, Post-Exilic Judaism, p. 10. Cf. also Strack und Billerbeck, Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, vol. IV, pp. 115ff.

⁵⁹ Philo, Quod omnis probus liber, 12.

⁶⁰ Philo, De somniis, II:127.

⁶¹ Philo, De vita Mosis, II:216.

uses the latter six times to translate the Hebrew שְׁמַע
יְהוָה.⁶²

By New Testament times, however, the synagogue had become an omni-present institution in Judaism. Found all over Palestine and in every part of the Roman Empire, it did not stop short of the very shadow of the Temple in Jerusalem where each nationality had its own synagogue.⁶³ Philo gives us a pretty good idea of what the synagogue services in his day were like.⁶⁴ The distinctive feature then was the reading of the Law to which were added selections from the prophets. It was a rather bare service more in the nature of class-room instruction than worship in the sense we understand. In New Testament times Scriptural interpretation (a running commentary on the lesson by a Rabbi or reader) and public disputation were also characteristic.⁶⁵ We have several good descriptions of a synagogue service from the Gospels and Acts.⁶⁶ Notable is the almost complete lack of liturgical elements and the prevalence of free and spontaneous speaking. Anyone in the congregation was free to express himself, and strangers were usually invited to address the people on whatever

⁶² Josephus, Ant., XIX:6:3; BJ, II:14:4f.; VII:3:3. Cf. also Johnston, The Church in the New Testament, pp. 19f.

⁶³ Acts 6:9.

⁶⁴ Philo, De septenario, 6; Quod omnis probus liber, 12; De somniis, II:18; and the quotation from the lost Hypothetica ap. Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica, VII:7.

⁶⁵ Mark 1:21; Acts 18:4. Cf. BC, vol. I, p. 161.

⁶⁶ Luke 4:16-21; Acts 13:14f.

subject they chose. Doubtless there were chants of the Psalms and several prayers, but most of the service was given over to teaching and exhortation. In this respect, it bears a striking resemblance to the type of Protestant service in which the sermon is given a central place of honour.

Though the recent trend in Protestant worship has been away from too much emphasis on preaching, as though it were not the essence of true worship, such didactic elements in the service were accepted by the Jews as being the very soul of communion with God. The synagogue was primarily "a place for instruction in the truths and duties of revealed religion; and in imparting and receiving this divine instruction no less than in praise or prayer they were doing honor to God - it was an act of worship."⁶⁷ The synagogue made no attempt to compete with the Temple service. Rather, the two were considered as complementary. Even after the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an abrupt end, the synagogue service did not change perceptibly. It was a purely rational worship involving neither sacrifice nor offering.

Regular instruction in religion, instead of being relegated to a peripheral activity of the congregation, became an organic part of the worship service, and even its most prominent feature. The reason for this great emphasis on instruction in the Law was two-fold. First, it

⁶⁷ G.F. Moore, Judaism, vol. I, p. 285.

was to fulfill God's will in the Law in order that the national hopes might be achieved and the nation's welfare secured. And, secondly, it was the means of attaining individual salvation at the resurrection. Such an attitude, without parallel among the religions of that time, assumed that religion is an intensely personal affair, in which no human mediation is possible. Each man must secure his own future; no priest can secure it for him. Particularly was this true after the lapse of the sacrificial system, but even before it, each Jew was taught that he would be responsible for his own sins, no matter how well the Temple rites were observed by the rest of the nation. Judaism, thus, became a religion of works par excellence. Unlike the mystery religions, salvation was not secured by some esoteric knowledge or by dark and mysterious rites. The Law was open for all to read, and salvation was dependent on the perfection of personal holiness by following that Law.

Though Judaism became essentially personal, it was also intensely national. The nation itself was seeking its salvation. The national hopes for independence and power as in the golden age of the United Kingdom or even in the brief Maccabean interlude were running high. According to the teaching of the Rabbis, this happy state of affairs would come only when the nation as a whole achieved a high state of holiness. Therefore, it was necessary for instruction in the Law to become universal.

The organization of the synagogue was as simple as

its worship. Obviously, there was no place for priests because there was no sacrifice. When a priest was present at the service, he pronounced the blessing at the end. But other than that, there was no sacerdotal differentiation whatever. The head of the synagogue was the president, elected usually from the body of the elders. Among the other functionaries there were attendants and one or more readers. None of these offices received compensation for its services, unless the synagogue was of such a large size that a paid caretaker became necessary. The elders of the congregation, chosen for their sagacity and ability as well as for their age, served as the governing board of the Jewish community and had seats of honour in the synagogue. They ordered the services, maintained discipline, and carried on the business of the whole Jewish family. The authority of the elders, in purely Jewish localities, extended beyond the religious to the civil life of the people. Frequently, they became a court of appeal in case of legal dispute, and they supervised the collection of both the civil taxes and the Temple tax. The distinction between purely religious and purely secular matters tended to disappear. Every act was a religious act and had to be performed as before God.⁶⁸

Nowhere was this seen more clearly than in the Jewish educational system. Every synagogue maintained as a

⁶⁸ Cf. Juster, Les Juifs dans l'empire Romain, vol. I, pp. 456ff. and Johnston, Op. cit., pp. 19f.

necessary part of its activities a school, for the sole purpose of teaching the youth how to read and understand the Law.⁶⁹ Alone among their heathen neighbours, the Jews established compulsory, universal education, and that for a purely religious purpose. The only text used was the Scriptures. Much of it was learned by heart, and the rest was read by the scholars under the guidance of a Rabbi. Private study was urged both by precept and example, while outstanding knowledge of the Law was encouraged through the extraordinary honour paid the Scribes and Rabbis. Learning became, for all practical purposes, synonymous with worship.⁷⁰

The value of the synagogue with its dual rôle of school and church can hardly be over-estimated. It was the cohesive agent in Israel, giving each small community of Jews a focal point. It made of each small Jewish group a microcosm of the whole nation completely self-sufficient and self-governing. The only authority it needed was found in the Torah, the Revelation of God. At the same time, by giving expression to the national hopes of the people, it provided an ecumenical outlook which bound all Judaism into one. There can be little question that next to the concept of God, the synagogue was the most important unitive influence the Jews possessed.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the early

⁶⁹ For a further description of these schools, cf. Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. II, pp. 46ff.

⁷⁰ Cf. Josephus, Apion, II:7; Vita Mosis, III:27; and Matt. 4:23; Luke 4:15, 31; 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20. Vide also Schürer, Op. cit., Div. II, vol. II, pp. 52ff.

Christian Church freely adopted much from the synagogue service for its own use. Here ready at hand was a vehicle expressly designed to conserve the fellowship of believers and to relate them to God. So the synagogue became the pattern by which the Church developed, or it would be more accurate to say it was the parent from which the Church emerged. For it was not recognized at first that Christianity was really a new religion. Not only the Romans, who could be forgiven a lack of perception in these matters, but even the Jewish leaders and the Christians themselves felt that they were still within the fold of orthodox Judaism. The Church was of the nature of a party synagogue rather than a new organization. As one authority has expressed it:

The point is well taken that early Christian worship differed very little from Jewish synagogue services. The very meagerness of the data on early Christian worship argues the point, since if a radical departure had been made, it would have been carefully explained. As a matter of fact, those elements which were different did receive a great deal of attention in Christian writings as the Agape meal and the Lord's Supper.⁷¹

One very significant but often overlooked fact which emerges from this relationship is the idea of unity inherent in the term ἐκκλησία which the Christians inherited. The Septuagint uses ἐκκλησία to translate the

⁷¹ Oesterley, The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy, pp. 84ff.

Hebrew קְהִלָּה , the community of Israel (principally as gathered for worship). This meaning is actually taken over into the New Testament in this Old Testament sense, when reference is made to "the Church in the wilderness"⁷² and again "in the midst of the Church."⁷³ Thus when Jesus uses ἐκκλησία (or its Aramaic equivalent) in Matt. 16:18, He implies that the new Messianic community is to be the קְהִלָּה of God just as Israel was so designated in the Old Testament. Paul makes this connection very clear when he calls the Church the "Israel of God"⁷⁴. Hence, the idea of the unity of the Church is essentially primitive. Commentators who try to make the ecumenical idea a late Pauline addition are surely overlooking this Old Testament basis as found in the Hebrew and mediated by the Septuagint.

Just as ἐκκλησία has a Hebrew background, so has κοινωνία . The Lord's Supper, the center of the Church's worship, was a fellowship meal. Here κοινωνία recalls the Aramaic "chabūra", which signifies a group of friends,⁷⁵ and was used, for instance, of a group of Jews who celebrated the Passover together.⁷⁶ Jesus and His disciples

⁷² Acts 7:38.

⁷³ Heb. 2:12 quoting from Psalm 22:22.

⁷⁴ Gal. 6:16. Cf. "the household of faith" in ver. 10.

⁷⁵ Hebrew חַבּוּרָא =friend.

⁷⁶ Cf. C.A. Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul, pp. 159ff.

constituted such a "chabūra", and probably the word was actually used to describe them. No doubt Jesus Himself felt the whole Church of the future was there in germ in His own "chabūra". This again would imply that the ecumenical idea of the Church goes back to Jesus, and beyond Him to the Jewish congregation.

The full indebtedness of Christianity to Judaism was enormous,⁷⁷ as is understandable in a movement which sprang from a completely Jewish source. But what is more significant is the great amount of Jewish belief and practice carefully retained even after Christianity became a thoroughly Gentile movement. Even in such matters as the disposal of the dead, Gentile Christians followed the Jewish custom of burial in rock tombs rather than cremation. Were it not for the distinctive Christian symbols on grave markers, the cemeteries of Jews and Christians in third century Rome would be practically indistinguishable.⁷⁸ Yet there were profound differences as well. Everything taken

⁷⁷ It has been admirably summarized by Harnack thus: "To the Jewish mission which preceded it, the Christian mission was indebted, in the first place, for a field tilled all over the empire; in the second place, for religious communities already formed everywhere in the towns; thirdly, for what Axenfield calls 'the help of materials' furnished by the preliminary knowledge of the Old Testament, in addition to catechetical and liturgical materials which could be employed without alteration; fourthly, for the habit of regular worship and a control of private life; fifthly, for an impressive apologetic on behalf of monotheism, historical teleology, and ethics; and finally, for the feeling that self-diffusion was a duty. The amount of this debt is so large, that one might venture to claim the Christian mission as a continuation of the Jewish propaganda." The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, p. 15.

⁷⁸ Cf. Schaff, History of the Church, vol. II, p. 290.

over by Christianity from Judaism was suited to the distinctive emphases of the former. Especially can this be seen with respect to the forces which made for unity.

The idea of God, while taken over from Judaism almost without change, was given a new slant. Two things in the Christian teaching marked it off from its parent religion. The holiness of God was given an emphasis it had never received under Jewish teaching. No longer was the Temple sacrifice sufficient to wipe out the stain of sin. The guilt of man doomed him to everlasting separation from God unless a divine Mediator crossed the chasm and mended the breach. True, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah sensed this inadequacy in the sacrificial system,⁷⁹ but no adequate substitute was offered. But after the revelation of God through Christ, the holiness of God as opposed to the awfulness of sin was seen in a totally new light. The second difference in the Christian teaching on God was the accent on the Fatherhood of God. Here again, we find echoes of this in the prophets,⁸⁰ but it never attained the central place that it came to occupy in Christian thought.

The second great unity of Judaism, its Temple and sacrificial system was soon rejected altogether by the Church even before the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ was the last and all-sufficient sacrifice so that from

⁷⁹ Amos 5:21ff.; Hosea 9:4; Isa. 1:10ff.; etc.

⁸⁰ Isa. 9:6; 63:16; Jer. 31:9; Mal. 2:10; etc.

hence-forth any other sacrifice would not only be useless but even blasphemous, since it amounted to a denial of Christ's offering on the cross. It was even denied that the animal sacrifices had ever been efficacious for the atonement of sin, The sacrifices of the Old Dispensation were only figures of Christ's sacrifice which God accepted as tokens of penitence but were not made effective until the offering of His Son on the cross. This view, while agreeing with the new Christian doctrine of God, constituted a distinct break with Judaism. It also freed Christianity from dependence on any geographical locality and thus made it proof against the vicissitudes of war and conquest. The continuance of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple showed that its religion was not absolutely dependent on the sacrificial system either. But the Jewish break with the Temple was due to historical necessity, while the Christian break was made by a free choice based on a new conviction.

The third unity of Judaism, the Law and its agent of propagation the synagogue, was largely taken over into Christianity but with profound reservations. The Law was accepted as the revelation of God's will, but under the guiding genius of Paul, it was given a different purpose. Whereas for the orthodox Jew, the Law was given to enable man to attain personal holiness and thus insure salvation individually for himself and collectively for the nation, this was denied by the Christians. The Law, said Paul, was given to prove to man the futility of

making himself as holy as he should be to merit salvation.⁸¹ Until Christ came, man was faced by a divine Law which was impossible to fulfill, and thus he was thrown more completely than ever upon the mercy of God. Christ's life, however, fulfilled the Law and thus broke its hold on the man who accepts Him as his Mediator. Henceforth, man achieves salvation, not through any direct merit on his own part or by complying with a Law but by dying to himself and being born again in Christ. This, of course, was the most radical departure of all from the orthodox Jewish view and quite naturally it was the teaching which largely inspired the violent persecution of the new Church by the Jewish authorities.

This violent reaction between Christian and Jew helped produce another interpretation of the Scriptures which lent itself readily to gross excesses. In an effort to get away as far as possible from the customary Jewish interpretation of the Law, Christian commentators turned to allegory as the right method of finding the meaning in God's Word. They went so far as to assert that a valid interpretation of the Bible must be made in terms of figures, types, and allegories.⁸² They then quite logically concluded that since the literal meaning was false and the spiritual meaning true, it must have been so from the

⁸¹ Cf. Rom. 5,7 and Gal. 3.

⁸² For an example of the absurd lengths to which this interpretation can go, vide Epistle of Barnabas, 7-10.

very first, since what was false yesterday could not be true today. If the Jewish people had always insisted on the literal meaning only, they must have been in error which proves they never were the chosen people of God. On the contrary, they had obviously fallen under the influence of the devil and so were a sinful, hypocritical race,⁸³ the devil's own people, the synagogue of Satan.⁸⁴ The concluding observation was that the Old Testament in its entirety had nothing at all to do with the Jews. It belonged, even from the first, to none other than the Christians.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, it was many centuries before the healing processes of time allowed a more reasonable and considered exegesis.

While the Church adopted an entirely new attitude toward the Law and, in effect, relegated it to a secondary position in its religious life, it took over the form of the synagogue almost without change. The same general type of organization was found in both. Even the same officers were carried over into the new institution with approximately the same functions. Gradually more specifically Christian elements were added. Christian hymns took their place beside the old chanted Psalms. To the readings from the Law and the Prophets were added letters

⁸³ Didache, VIII:1f.

⁸⁴ Rev. 2:9; 3:9.

⁸⁵ Justin Martyr, Dial. c. Trypho, Apol.; Rev. 2:9; 3:9; Didache, VIII; Barnabas 9. Cf. Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 65ff.

from the Apostles and scriptural homilies. The extempore sermons dealt largely with Christian doctrines such as the life of Christ, His death and resurrection, and with problems of Christian morality. Entirely new and central in the worship of the Church were the distinctive services of the Lord's Supper and the Agape feast. A new significance was given to the service of baptism. The local manifestations of the Church, however, were similar to the synagogues in welding the religious communities into a unity. They served also as centers of communication between individual believers and the leaders of the Church as a whole.

From about 140 A.D. onward⁸⁶ the transition from Judaism to Gentile Christianity was about completed. The foundations of the Church had been well laid and thereon a considerable structure was already erected. The virile young child of the Jewish faith had taken from its parent all that it could use; after that it was inevitable that the two religions should grow farther and farther apart as they developed in different directions. Subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem, the Jews made no more serious attempts to stamp out Christianity, except in local efforts and for short periods of time. Quite the contrary, the Christians took over what had been Jewish strongholds - her propaganda and her proselytes, and not infrequently Christians joined pagans in the persecution of the Jews.

⁸⁶ Harnack, Op. cit., vol. I, p. 70.

No study of the background of Christianity would be complete without investigating the influence of the Hellenic civilization then dominant in the Roman Empire. It is quite true that despite its Jewish heritage the Church was profoundly influenced by Hellenic streams of thought. The Greek language, understood everywhere, made the commerce of new ideas a relatively easy matter. The philosophic bent of Greek thought coupled with a universal thirst for a more satisfying religious belief helped immeasurably to further the spread of the Gospel. The policy of the Roman government in granting a large measure of religious toleration allowed Christianity to make great advances before persecution struck. But despite all these influences, not one can be said to form an essential element in the unity of the Church.

With customary thoroughness, Harnack has listed nine conditions in paganism which helped the expansion of Christianity.⁸⁷ All of these contributed in some way to

⁸⁷ 1) The Hellenizing of the East and part of the West and the comparative unity of language and ideas which this Hellenization produced.
 2) The world-empire of Rome resulting in political unity.
 3) The exceptional facilities, growth, and security of international traffic - roads, merchants, teachers.
 4) The practical and theoretical conviction of the essential unity of mankind.
 5) The decomposition of ancient society into a democracy.
 6) The religious policy of Rome - toleration for all creeds except what condemned state ceremonial.
 7) The existence of associations and municipal and provincial organizations.
 8) The irruption of the Syrian and Persian religions into the empire.
 9) The rising vogue of mystical philosophy of religion with a craving for some sort of revelation and a thirst for miracles.
The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 19ff.

the cohesion of the Church. But none can be considered indispensable to unity in the same way that the idea of God or the Scriptures as the revealed will of God were. While conceding that Greek as the language of the New Testament and the lingua franca of the Empire had a great influence in the spread of the Gospel, it would be a mistake to consider it as essential to Church unity. The prevalence of many early translations of the New Testament into Syriac, Aramaic (part of the New Testament may originally have been written in this tongue), Ethiopic, etc. shows that churches using these other languages flourished within the recognized totality of Christendom. While the orthodoxy of some of these groups may have been called into question, the fact they used non-Greek tongues was never suggested as a reason for their exclusion from the Church universal.

It is also true that the political unity of the Roman Empire did much to aid the advance of Christianity, but the unity of the Church and that of the Empire were quite dissimilar in many respects. While the former was democratic, decentralized (for the first two centuries at least), based on the equality of men before God, the latter was autocratic, dictatorial, highly centralized, and resting partly on the doctrine that the emperor was a god himself. Christianity depended on a minimum of coercion to maintain a united front; Rome, on the other hand, depended almost exclusively on its army to

bind the Empire into one. It cannot be said, therefore, that the unity of Rome was taken over by the Church.

The conviction that mankind is a unity was an unconscious outgrowth of the political unity that was Rome. Only as long as Roman legions held off the barbarian hordes did this feeling of unity flourish; once the social deterioration sapped the vitality of the army, the Empire crumbled and with it went this conviction that mankind was a unity. The unity of the Christian Church was of a radically different nature. More spiritual in character and depending on personal loyalty to a Risen Saviour, it proved far more enduring than the Roman unity based on political coercion. It would be an error to see in the breakdown of Roman society a democracy anything like the democracy of the Church. Rigid class distinctions, it is true, were shifting rapidly at the dawn of the Christian era. Freedmen, through wealth or leadership ability, could become aristocrats; even slaves could buy their freedom and rise to previously unobtainable social levels. But the class distinctions still remained. The very fact that they could be crossed made them loom even larger in the social consciousness. In the primitive Church, on the other hand, class barriers were all but wiped out. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," cried Paul.⁸⁸ This

⁸⁸ Galatians 3:28.

is true democracy, a society free of religious, social, or sexual inequalities in its basic relationships.

A more cogent case for dependence can be made for the mystery religions. Coming from the lands of Asia and Asia Minor with their wealth of passionate mysticism and springing out of a deep concern for personal salvation, they answered a felt need in the religious life of the Empire. It is unquestioned that the life of the early Church was influenced by these esoteric cults, though the dependence of the former on the latter is no longer believed to be as great as it once was. In the matter of unity, however, the mystery religions had nothing to offer Christianity. These cults had very little unity about them at all. Each adherent was led to believe that the secret rites in which he engaged related him personally to the cultic god and so insured salvation. But he was not given any creedal statement to accept, nor was he asked to conform to a certain ethical pattern of life, nor was he given a written revelation of his god as a sacred Scripture. Consequently, there was no congregational relationship in the worship of the god, and the adherents had little more necessary relationship to one another than an audience at a theatre performance.

. . . there is not the faintest suggestion of anything like Christian letters of introduction to a new diocese or of a holy Isiac church throughout the world. There was a will to power in the Alexandrian priesthood of Isis and

Serapis . . . but no oecumenical organization. There was a universalist point of view . . . but the supposed or desired piety of the world is no more than an aggregate of the individual pieties.⁸⁹

It was in no small part due to this lack of cohesion in the mystery religions, a cohesion which was so strongly felt in the early Church, that the Church ultimately triumphed over them. The times were such that a universal religion was needed to fill the vacuum left in the crumbling Empire.⁹⁰ Christianity, while satisfying the demands met by the Oriental religions, answered this need as well, which the latter were unable to do. So after a sharp, but relatively short conflict, the mystery religions gradually dwindled away.⁹¹

Thus it transpired that a despised minority of a despised minority, because it was fresh and vigorous, full of hope, and closely united, gradually became the inheritors of the pagan world. It would be the worst sort of over-simplification to ascribe this spiritual victory to any one cause, But one reason for the triumph that has often been neglected is this confrontation of

⁸⁹ A.D. Nock, Conversion, p. 135.

⁹⁰ Arnold J. Toynbee, in his massive Study of History, makes this transition from universal state to universal church a characteristic of most civilizations. Cf. vol. I, pp. 56ff. But, unfortunately, the volume dealing with the analysis of this phenomenon has not yet been published.

⁹¹ cf. Johnston, Op. cit., p. 14.

intense spiritual unity to a paganism which consisted of a loose aggregation of diverse beliefs. In the end, unity prevailed over disunity, and perhaps that is a lesson for our time as well.⁹²

⁹² cf. Schaff, History of the Church, vol. II, Div. I, p. 22.

Chapter II

JESUS CHRIST THE LORD

“Ὅπου ἂν ᾖ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός,¹
ἐκεῖ ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

Despite the fact that the early Christian Church borrowed liberally from its Jewish background, it was not to this source that the Christians looked for their basis of unity. The faith, the fellowship of the primitive community, even its acts of worship radiated from an immediate relation to their Risen Lord. Nor was this a new phenomenon that arose subsequent to the resurrection; from the very outset of Christ's mission, He was the focus of the disciples' common life. As the circle of believers widened and more adherents were gained, this characteristic Christo-centricity became ever more evident. Jesus was the center of every scene in which He figured.

At first such a state of affairs did not excite undue remark. Every great Jewish teacher attracted a group of disciples not only because of his erudition but often because of his strong personality. Almost every great religion has had its genesis in some dynamic figure who gathered about him a widening circle of believers in his new faith. It is quite customary for a new religion to find its doctrine and order in the life and sayings of its originator. But several elements in the life of our Lord marked Him off as being distinctly unique in His

¹ Ignatius, Smyr., 8.

relation to His disciples; in fact it was the presence of just such elements that caused Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Two of them have an immediate bearing on the present subject, and an investigation of them is in order.

First, Christ claimed for Himself a Messianic function, and second, He acted with divine authority. During the early part of the nineteenth century and right on into the twentieth a vigorous battle has been waged over the subject of Jesus' Messianic consciousness. In the effort to cut away the legendary accretion of the centuries and to arrive at a purely historical understanding of the life and sayings of Jesus, scholars subjected the early Christian documents to a severely critical examination. With unparalleled thoroughness, German critics in particular attacked almost every traditional assertion of orthodox Christianity. The storm aroused by this conflict has not yet completely subsided, but a less radical approach seems to be winning support in scholarly circles everywhere. Among the cherished beliefs which came under the guns of textual and historical criticism was the claim of Jesus to Messianic authority. Among the earliest scholars who denied that Jesus made any Messianic claims were Wrede, Bousset, and Wellhausen.²

² Cf. Bousset, Kurios Christos, pp. 79-82 and Wrede, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien. Julius Kaftan in his Jesus und Paulus, written specifically to answer the allegations of the above, says (p. 14) "Für Jesu eignes Bewusstsein, auf das es hier allein ankommt, ist seine Sendung als der Messias Israels, als der Christ des Herrn die sein inneres Leben und all sein Tun bedingende Tatsache gewesen."

Their case was based largely on two positions: first, Jesus made very few direct references to Himself as the Messiah, and second, those passages in which He does claim such prerogatives were not actually spoken by Him. This opinion has been shared by such men as Havet³ and more recently by Foakes-Jackson and Lake⁴ and partially by E. F. Scott.⁵ Though Lietzmann denies that we possess any accurate saying in which Jesus states Himself to be the Messiah, he goes on to say there can be little doubt that our Lord regarded Himself as the fulfilment of Messianic prophecy.⁶

Despite these doubts, however, the arguments on the other side give much the better case. It is quite true that Jesus' designation of Himself as the Messiah was usually veiled and only rarely did it come out into the open. But the reasons for this are so obvious as to be almost self-evident. Even before the time of the Mac-cabees, the Messianic hope had become all mixed up with

³ Le Christianisme et ses origines, vol. IV, pp. 15ff.

⁴ BC, vol. I, p. 267: "It is, however, clear that it [the Gospel of Mark] was composed partly to show that the deeds of Jesus during his ministry prove that he was the Messiah, though he never made the claim." Cf. also p. 283: ". . . of the identification of Jesus with the Davidic Messiah. This was the belief of the disciples: it may have been, but probably was not, the belief of Jesus: it was not part of his 'gospel', though it was the centre of theirs." This is much the same line as that taken by Baur and the Tübingen school. For an answer to this argument, cf. A.B. Bruce, Apologetics, pp. 359ff. esp. p. 374.

⁵ The Kingdom and the Messiah, pp. 156ff. He rejects the Matthean tradition of Peter's confession as being at best to be "accepted with grave reserve." p. 160.

political aspirations. Far from being a novelty, the advent of a "messiah" was almost a yearly occurrence, and every "messiah" signalized a revolt against Roman political control. Therefore Christ had a two-fold reason for delaying the admission of His Messianic claims. His views of the Messiah's function were so radically different from anything that the Jewish people held that He had to train His disciples into completely new channels of thought. The astounding synthesis of Daniel's Son of Man and the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah proved almost incredible to the Jewish mind. Even Peter thought it verged on the blasphemous.⁷ To have openly declared His Messianic calling, then, without this preliminary teaching on the meaning and implications of the title would have been to invite misunderstanding of His purpose and aims.

Still another reason for Jesus' refusal to make an open display of His Messiahship was the attitude of the political authorities. Because of the connotation the word had, Messiah had become tantamount to rebel. As soon as anyone was suspected of Messianic claims, he was summarily dispatched. Jesus did not want to cut short His own ministry by a premature revelation of His title. It was not that He was afraid; the trial and crucifixion

⁶ The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 68f. Lietzmann denies the authenticity of Mark 14:62 - Jesus' confession before the high priest.

⁷ Matthew 16:22.

proved that He could take a fearless stand when He knew the time was ripe. But there was so much to be done with the little band of disciples and so little time in which to do it. Until the Twelve had caught a glimpse of this new conception, and the future of this new faith could be assured, it would have been the utmost folly to proclaim Himself as God's Messiah. As Dr. Mackenzie has observed so well:

That the 'political' aspect of Messiahship was prominent is plain from the fact that, when He confessed Himself to be the 'Christ' at His trial, His enemies at once made that the basis of the accusation before Pilate that He claimed to be king, and that this title 'King of the Jews' was set upon His cross. It is this fact that alone is sufficient to account for His avoidance of the title, His open acceptance of it from the disciples only after they had learned something of its transformation.⁸

With this explanation for the paucity of materials, then, the charge of unauthenticity remains to be examined. The subject is much too broad to be treated exhaustively in this dissertation, but reference to six key passages will indicate the scope of the sources. In Luke 4:16-21 we have the record of Jesus' appearance in His own home synagogue near the beginning of His public ministry.⁹

⁸ W.D. Mackenzie, "Jesus Christ", HERE, vol. 7, p. 513.

⁹ William Manson, on the basis of Mark 1:21 & 6:1 as well as Luke 4:23, places this incident later in Jesus' ministry, but even then, it would not be much later than the first year of His mission. The Gospel of Luke, MNTC, pp. 40f.

Having been handed the sacred scroll, He read from Isaiah 61:1ff. and part of Isaiah 58:6. Everyone in the congregation was well aware that these passages referred to the Messiah, so when Jesus concluded the reading with the pregnant saying, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," there could be no reasonable doubt that He was relating the Messianic prophecy to Himself. It is hypercriticism of the worst sort to object that these were not Jesus' own words. Even though they may not be an exact quotation, the meaning must have been the same or the entire incident is robbed of all significance. There is absolutely no reason for questioning the text, as it is attested by all the important manuscripts.

A similar witness of Jesus to His Messianic calling is found in Matthew 11:1-6 where He answers John the Baptist's query, "Are you He that is to come, or shall we look for another?"¹⁰ Here again, Jesus answers with a paraphrase of Scripture, using parts of Isaiah 29:18; 35:5 and 61:1. The implication is obvious: by fulfilling the prophecy of the Messiah He had vindicated His right to be called the Messiah. Only if Jesus was convinced of

¹⁰ It has been objected in this verse that ὁ ἐρχόμενος and ὁ χριστός were different persons in Jewish thought. (e.g. Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, pp. 162f.) The grounds for this assertion are too tenuous for serious consideration. Cf. A.B. Bruce, The Expositor's Greek New Testament, vol. I, pp. 169f. and A. Carr, St. Matthew in the Cambridge Greek Testament, p. 170 giving the Hebrew derivation of the former term.

His Messianic calling could He have answered as He did.

A third reference of Jesus to His title, this time more openly, is found in His conversation with the woman at the well of Samaria: John 4:7-26.¹¹ Though there are no serious textual problems in the passage, the account has been rejected as largely unhistorical by a number of German scholars and even some modern commentators.¹² Among the difficulties suggested is the fact that Jesus would not assert His Messianic claims so early in His ministry and especially to an ignorant Samaritan woman.¹³ But this presupposes either that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah or that He did not reveal His claim until late

¹¹ The reliability of the entire Fourth Gospel has been made the subject of considerable controversy, ranging all the way from complete rejection to unqualified acceptance. My own position on the matter can best be stated in the words of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple: "First, I regard as self-condemned any theory which fails to find a very close connexion between the Gospel and John the son of Zebedee. The combination of external and internal evidence is overwhelming on this point. ... the view which now seems to me to do fullest justice to the evidence is that the writer - the Evangelist - is John the Elder, who was an intimate disciple of John the Apostle." Readings in St. John's Gospel, p. x.

¹² Among them Pfleiderer, Primitive Christianity, vol. IV, p. 30; H.J. Holtzmann, Evangelium, Briefe und Offenbarung des Johannes, pp. 101ff.; and G.H.C. Macgregor, The Gospel of John, MNTC, pp. 96ff. It is impossible to cover all the objections raised against this passage or the arguments in its favour, without unduly prolonging the text of the dissertation. Obviously, all the passages here adduced in favour of Christ's Messianic claims I consider authentic. The evidence may be found in the footnote references cited for each passage.

¹³ Cf. Macgregor, The Gospel of John, MNTC, pp. 115f.

in His public life. Both views are completely without warrant. As Dr. Alford has so trenchantly said, "There is nothing so opposed to true Scripture criticism, as to form a preconceived plan and rationale of the course of our Lord in the flesh, and then to force recorded events into agreement with it."¹⁴ Though we can never know with absolute certainty the cause of Jesus' actions, a plausible enough reason in this instance is that in Samaria He could reveal His true nature without raising false political hopes. And, if the account in John is true at all, He was eminently successful. If it be asked, who heard this conversation so that it could be recorded, the most likely answer is that John himself was witness to it. It seems doubtful that all the disciples would desert our Lord to go in search of bread. Also, was it not because he stayed closer to Jesus than the other disciples that John was called the "beloved disciple"? The desire on the part of the Fourth Evangelist for anonymity (a desire reflected quite frequently in his Gospel) accounts for his failure to record the presence of any but Jesus and the woman. Suffice it so say, then, that though this passage might stand in question if it were the only self-assertion of our Lord's Messiahship, when joined with the other passages cited it adds to the not inconsiderable chain of evidence.

¹⁴ Alford, The Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 732.
Cf. Bernard, St. John, ICC, vol. I, pp. 143ff.

Probably the most active storm center for critical debate is the Matthean account of Peter's confession (Matt. 16:13-20); but there is fairly general agreement about the passage which concerns us here, namely, $\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\ \delta\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma\ \delta\ \iota\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \zeta\omega\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$. The simpler form in Mark 8:29 which omits the last clause does not materially alter the meaning, since the important fact is the assertion of Christ as the Messiah.¹⁵ It should be noted that in the Markan version, Jesus does not deny Peter's statement but only warns the disciples against a premature revelation of His real identity. Rudolph Otto has pointed out that according to Hebrew belief and tradition Jesus could not have proclaimed Himself as the Christ. Only God could do that. For example, it was God who proclaimed Enoch as the Son of Man. Hence, when Peter broke out with his spontaneous confession, Jesus not only accepted it but cried out in exaltation, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah. . . ."¹⁶ But it was not so much for His own sake that Jesus welcomed Peter's confession. The leading question which led up to it shows that our Lord already knew His special mission in life. Rather, it was to test His

¹⁵ As Meyer puts it, "Auf die ganz aus Mark. entlehnte Frage, für wen sie ihn denn halten, antwortet Petrus, der hier zur Vorbereitung auf V. 17 mit seinem vollen Namen genannt wird, im Namen der anderen Jünger. - $\delta\iota\acute{o}\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \zeta\omega\nu\tau\omicron\varsigma$) zu dem einfachen Messias - bekenntnisse bei Mark. hinzugefügt, kann nach 14:33 nicht eine Steigerung desselben bezeichnen, als ob hier . . . die höhere Natur Christi angebedeutet wäre." Das Matthaus-Evangelium, 10th ed., p. 294.

¹⁶ Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p. 221.

disciples that the question was posed. Already the path ahead pointed straight to the cross and Jesus saw how imperative it was that at least the disciples should understand the purpose and meaning of His mission. Peter's words showed Him that they were beginning - perhaps only dimly at first and yet beginning - to comprehend the true function of the Messiah of God.¹⁷

The reticence of Jesus in making a public show of His claims is laid aside at His trial, for there it was no longer necessary to hide His true identity. Faced as well by the solemn adjuration of the high priest, which no pious Jew could disregard, He answered with the simple affirmation $\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}$. (Matt. 26:64. In Mark it is even more direct: $\epsilon\acute{\gamma}\omega\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\iota!$ 14:62.) Though this answer may seem to be qualifying the question of the high priest, as indeed it was insofar as the word $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{o}\varsigma$ connoted the political messianism then current, it was understood by the high priest and the rest of the Jewish court to be an explicit claim to the Messianic role. Certainly, if there were any ambiguity at all in Jesus' reply, His quoting of Daniel 7:13 in which He obviously equated Himself with the Son of Man, should dispel any doubts as to His meaning.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cf. further Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 223 and W.C. Allen, St. Matthew, ICC, pp.175f.

¹⁸ Lietzmann rejects this passage on what appears very slim grounds. Vide supra footnote #6. It has been generally accepted as authentic by the great majority of the other commentators. Of the Markan version, Otto says, "Christ's original saying in Mark 14:62 is all the more valuable to us. It is authentic because it could not have been invented by the theology of the church, and it gives a reliable attestation to Christ's claim to Messianic

Jesus not only believed that He was the Christ of God, but at last He proclaimed Himself as such before His enemies. What a contrast there is between our Lord and the false "messiahs" who had preceeded Him! All other claimants to the title had publicly proclaimed themselves when surrounded by friends and faced by at least a reasonable hope of success in carrying out their program for the New Age. But not so with Jesus: only when the crowds had melted away and He was faced with a felon's death did He boldly say, "I am!" Here was no unwilling pawn forced into prominence by the blind forces of history. Quite the reverse - this was a leader who took the forces which spelled defeat and forged them into eternal victory.¹⁹ This was a Messiah indeed!

The full meaning of this victory, however, did not become apparent until after the resurrection. The cross

18(cont.) rank . . . He was crucified as a Messianic claimant and without the Messianic claim the crucifixion of Christ is meaningless. The fact that he was crucified proves that he did not want to clear himself of the suspicion of being a claimant to Messiahship, and therefore that he confirmed this claim before the procurator." The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, pp. 228f.

¹⁹ William Manson in Jesus the Messiah writes: "We see the Jewish ideas of the Messiah and of the World to Come being bent to take the shape of the fortunes of Jesus and so transmuted. It was not a case of an ardent Messianic hope leading men to believe in Jesus but of an ardent faith in Jesus leading men to believe in the Messianic hope." p. 150. Cf. further Wernle, Beginnings of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 44ff. and Bernard Weiss, The Life of Christ, vol. I, pp. 29f. Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, writes: "The Church did not produce, but was produced by, that Messianic faith, and without that faith it would not have come into being." p. 159.

had shattered all the hopes of the disciples; their feeling was best expressed in the wistful words of the two travellers on the road to Emmaus: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." (Luke 24:21ff.) Jesus replies to this with an exposition of the Scriptures in the light of His own mission (verses 25ff.). Once again He pointed out that His suffering and death were not only compatible with Messianic prophecy but were necessary to fulfill it. It is evident, therefore, that from the beginning of His public ministry to the end Jesus believed Himself to^{be} the Messiah of God.²⁰ It was largely for this reason that our Lord summoned men to attach themselves to Him: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."²¹

²⁰ Of course the passages cited in support of this statement are not all the texts on the subject, but it is felt that they are sufficient to prove the point. For other references, cf. Matt. 12:6,42; Mark 2:5ff.; 6:29ff.; Luke 2:11,26; 4:41; 9:21f; 20:9ff.; John 1:41; 6:14,69; 7:41; 8:28; 11:27; etc. If it is objected that there are few passages from Mark, the oldest of the Gospels, it should be sufficient to point out first, that two of the above passages cited have counterparts in Mark (Matt. 16:16ff. = Mark 8:27ff. and Matt. 26:63f. = Mark 14:62), and second, Mark was written with a predominantly Gentile audience in view to whom the idea of the Messiah would have little meaning. It is natural, therefore, that Mark would not make any special effort to include in his relatively short account those details which served to prove Jesus' Messiahship. It was this task which St. Matthew took to himself when he wrote the first Gospel. Cf. Martin, The Finality of Jesus for Faith, ch. III; J.A. Robertson, The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Jesus, p. 185; and J.S. Stewart, A Man in Christ, pp. 296ff.

²¹ John 15:4,5. Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, pp. 63f. As Flew has pointed out, this is no "flight of the alone to the Alone" but "It belongs to those in the community. It is an integral part of the idea of the Ecclesia." Jesus and His Church, p. 80.

This fact, however, only serves to emphasize another, namely, that Christ's attitude towards His disciples or even His enemies cannot be explained on the basis of His Messianic consciousness alone. Running all through His ministry there is a strain of conduct and teaching which is intelligible only if Christ believed Himself to be in some unique fashion divine.²² No prophet, judge, or would-be "Messiah" of Israel had ever claimed as high a degree of authority. Though He quoted from the Old Testament very liberally, He transformed the teaching found there so that it all pointed directly to Himself.²³ One has but to note the variety and inclusiveness of Jesus' self-designations to see how far beyond mere Messianism they go - at least beyond the then current conception of the Messianic function. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."²⁴ I am the light of

²² This does not mean Christ's consciousness of Sonship came to Him subsequent to His Messianic consciousness. On the contrary, as Harnack has put it, "It is obvious that our Lord's consciousness of Sonship must have preceded in time the consciousness of Messiahship, must indeed have formed a stepping-stone to the latter." The Sayings of Jesus, p. 245. Cf. also A.B. Macaulay, The Death of Jesus, pp. 89ff.

²³ As an excellent example of this, Otto has demonstrated that Matt. 11:28ff. came from Sirach 51:23ff. The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, pp. 170f. "Turn in unto me, ye unlearned, and lodge in my house of instruction. How long will ye lack these things? And (how long) shall your soul be so athirst? I open my mouth and speak of her. Acquire Wisdom for yourselves without money. Bring your necks under her yoke, and her burden let your soul bear." (from the trans. by R.H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, vol. I, pp. 516f.) Whereas Sirach says he has Wisdom, Jesus claims to be Wisdom - it is He who gives rest; it is His yoke we must bear; and it is His burden which will prove light.

²⁴ John 14:6.

the world.²⁵ I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the good shepherd.²⁶ I am the resurrection and the life.²⁷ All things have been delivered (παρεδόθη) to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.²⁸ I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.²⁹ The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.³⁰ I am the true vine. . . . If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you."³¹

The reason our Lord did not draw a clean distinction between His office of Messiah and His divinity is first, because in Him there was no such distinction. The Jewish people had always thought of the Messiah as being either human or at best a mighty spirit. But it had never occurred to them that God would send His Son to be the Messiah. Jesus, on the other hand, knew that as God's Messiah He was both human and divine. Whereas the two had always been separated in Jewish thought by an immeasurable

²⁵ John 8:12.

²⁶ John 10:7,11.

²⁷ John 11:25.

²⁸ Matthew 11:27f. Cf. Luke 10:22.

²⁹ John 6:35.

³⁰ Mark 2:28. Cf. Luke 6:5.

³¹ John 15:1,7.

distinction, Jesus was the link which bridged them together. Therefore in Christ a distinction between the two titles of "Lord" and "Christ" was both unwise and untruthful. The second reason for Jesus' seeming lack of definiteness is that a long slow process of education was necessary before even His disciples could accept this new truth without thinking of it as blasphemy. And so under the matchless tutelage of our Lord, the disciples were led on step by step until they caught a glimpse of God's mighty plan of salvation which men even today find so difficult to apprehend in its entirety.

And how was this accomplished? It was certainly not mere exhortation or teaching alone, nor was it a series of healing miracles which made Peter say, "Thou art the Christ!" or Thomas cry "My Lord and my God." Rather it was the contagion of daily living in the presence of the greatest life the world has ever known. Through personal contact over a period of several years the conviction grew in the minds of the Twelve that here they were dealing with a Person who was human and yet vastly more than human.

Where can we find in the history of mankind any similar instance of men eating and drinking with their master, seeing him in the characteristic aspects of his humanity, and then proclaiming him not only as the great prophet and revealer of God, but as the divine disposer of history, as the "beginning" of God's creation, and as the inner strength of a new

life! It was not thus that Mahommed's disciples spoke of their prophet. Neither is it sufficient to assert that the Messianic predicates were simply transferred to Jesus, and that everything may be explained by Jesus' expected return in glory throwing its radiance backwards. . . . in spite of suffering and death it was possible to see in him the promised Messiah. . . . side by side with the vulgar Messianic image of him, men felt and opened their hearts to him as the present Lord and Saviour, that is what is so astonishing!³²

Our sources show that the first impression Jesus made on His disciples was a sense of supreme authority.³³ It is not known how much knowledge the Galilean fishermen had of Jesus before the first call to discipleship was given, but even if He had been well acquainted with all of them the power of His authority must have been tremendous to make them leave their work, their families, and their communities without any knowledge of the future

³² Harnack, What is Christianity?, pp. 154f. Lake denies that Jesus claimed or was conscious of any divine prerogatives, but such a judgment seems to me unduly influenced by rationalistic higher criticism and its attempt to delete from the Gospel narrative as much of the supernatural as possible. Vide B.C., vol. I, pp. 285 & 287f.

³³ "The ascendancy which He exercised in thus drawing men away from their worldly callings and hopes into association with Himself is quite indefinite, and even in yielding to it the four first disciples could have no distinct idea of what it involved. But they did yield. They left their nets and followed Him, and . . . the sense deepened in their hearts of His right to command." James Denney, Jesus and the Gospel, p. 216. Cf. A. Sabatier, The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit, pp. 293f. and Bernard Weiss, The Life of Christ, vol. I, p. 365 and vol. II, pp. 148ff. John was so strongly impressed with Jesus' authority on first meeting Him that he remembered the very hour of the day when it happened. (John 1:37-39).

at the simple command, "Follow me."³⁴ Nor was this sense of authority weakened by the passage of time. When Jesus spoke, it was "as one having authority and not as the scribes."³⁵ The demons and the angry elements alike obeyed Him.³⁶ And yet the disciples would have denied vigorously that they were coerced in any way. Their Master carefully preserved their liberty of expression, and He insisted on their personal responsibility; those who wished to leave Him were free to do so, and Judas could still betray Him.³⁷ The authority of Jesus was such that it demanded and received complete submission by virtue of its innate qualities of rightness and goodness. The disciples instinctively felt that here was the Truth and the Power of God incarnate in human flesh.

In the presence of such a compelling Personality, there was no question as to where the unity of the little community of believers lay. Jesus was the Unity, the Authority, in fact He was the community. Peter and the rest would find completely alien such a definition of authority as that given by a liberal churchman: "Broadly

³⁴ Matt. 4:18-22; 9:9. That Jesus not only expected but demanded such obedience to His command is seen in Matt. 10:37 and Luke 14:33.

³⁵ Matt. 7:28; Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32.

³⁶ Matt. 8:31f; Mark 5:6ff.; Luke 4:35; Matt. 8:26; Mark 6:48ff; etc.

³⁷ John 6:66; Mark 14:10. Cf. the excellent article by Denney, "Authority of Christ", HDCG, vol. I, p. 147.

speaking, therefore, we describe the authority of the Church as the power of the corporate conscience, the witness of 'the general' within the realm of faith."³⁸ Even less acceptable would be that of a liberal Roman theologian: "One's belief in the Church as the Organ of religion is to some extent one's belief in the laws of collective psychology, which are the laws of nature, which are the laws of God."³⁹ One can almost hear the bluff Peter snorting in disgust at such nonsense - "corporate conscience, collective psychology" indeed! They were not following any corporate conscience but the great Norm of all conscience, no collective psychology but the God who created the souls and minds of all mankind.⁴⁰

To have impressed the disciples with this sense of authority, Jesus must have been conscious of it Himself. Though He kept Himself subservient to the Father, He did not hesitate to place Himself in the forefront of His Gospel. Not to a creed or a system did He ask men to adhere but to Himself. Harnack is quite wrong when he says, "The Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it has to do with the

³⁸ J.H. Leckie, Authority in Religion, pp. 135f.

³⁹ George Tyrell, Mediaevalism, p. 146. It is not surprising from these views that Father Tyrell was subsequently forced to leave the Church of Rome.

⁴⁰ Cf. on this A.B. Bruce, Apologetics, pp. 492f.; Gore, The Incarnation of the Son of God, p. 173; and Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, pp. 80f.

Father only and not with the Son."⁴¹ One of the most characteristic phrases of Jesus is διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου ,⁴² and it is found at the end of the most solemn utterances and in connection with the most exalted claims. Unless Jesus recognized Himself as being more than human, such statements would be the rankest blasphemy - words He, as a pious Jew, would sooner die than utter. In short, the whole account of the life of our Lord is a meaningless enigma unless we accept His self-conscious divinity.

It is this fact which accounts in large measure for the charge that Jesus did not found a church.⁴³ Obviously, it was useless to set up any organization until the basis on which it was to be founded was fully established. Jesus' whole ministry was taken up with establishing this basis: His divinity and Messianic call. It is useless to speculate on what our Lord would have done if He had lived ten or twenty years longer, because it took

⁴¹ Harnack, What is Christianity?, pp. 142ff. Contrast his History of Dogma, vol. I, pp. 71ff.

⁴² Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17. Cf. a very discerning treatment of this in Denny, Jesus and the Gospel, pp. 224ff. "The mind out of which it sprung can only be the mind of one who is conscious that He is related as no other can be to the purposes of God and the life of men."

⁴³ "The most remarkable feature of the Marcan evidence is that it gives no support to the view that Jesus intended to found a Church separate from that of the Jews." Jackson & Lake, BC, vol. I, pp. 296f. "During the lifetime of Jesus on earth, there was no sign of an organized community." E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, pp. 62f. Cf. Olaf Linton, Das Problem der Urkirche in der neueren Forschung, p. 179; Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, p. 407; Flew, Jesus and His Church, pp. 24ff.; and Bernard Weiss, The Life of Christ, vol. II, pp. 259ff.

the crucifixion and resurrection to confirm His claims. But once these claims were established, the next step was the formation of an organization.⁴⁴ On the whole, this proceeded in an orderly fashion under the direction of the Apostles, but it depended on two very important elements: a belief in the truth of Christ's teaching and claims, and a fellowship which had been experienced during Christ's life in the flesh. So it is quite true that Jesus did not organize a Church in opposition to official Judaism, but it is entirely erroneous to infer from this that the formation of the Church was in any way alien to His purpose. It was merely the projection of that lordship of life which Christ claimed as His right.⁴⁵ In the repeated proclamation of the Kingdom of God, it is He who is given the "Kingship" and can speak of "My Kingdom."⁴⁶ To Him were "delivered" all things, by which is undoubtedly meant that He had received divine authority both to legislate and establish the Kingdom.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ There is a mediating position on this thorny subject of Jesus' relation to His Church: "Jesus did not deliberately plan this new society, but it originated with Him." E.F. Scott, The Nature of the Early Church, p. 28. In other words, Jesus did not intend the Church, but it was an inevitable consequence of His ministry.

⁴⁵ Cf. Mackenzie, "Jesus Christ", HERE, vol. 7, p. 520; also C.J. Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, chap. VI; and P.T. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 101ff.

⁴⁶ Luke 22:29f.; Matt. 13:41. Cf. Matt. 20:21.

⁴⁷ Matt. 11:25-27 and Luke 10:21f.

Before leaving this subject of Jesus' central position and authority for the disciples, it would be well to examine briefly three elements on which they depended, namely, His teaching, His miracles, and His personal relationship with His followers. When we examine the Sermon on the Mount and the other examples of Jesus' teaching, it soon becomes apparent that there is no new doctrine of God here. Jewish literature affords parallels for every theological precept He laid down.⁴⁸ But where the teaching of Jesus diverged markedly from that of the Rabbis and Scribes was in the place He took with reference to His teaching and the place He assigned to the Law. Unlike the other Jewish scholars or even the prophets of old, Jesus set Himself up as His own authority. "You have heard that it was said But I say unto you."⁴⁹ Verily I say unto you, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."⁵⁰ "He taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes."⁵¹ While He exhorted His disciples to repentance, to watching, to service, Jesus never associated Himself as a subject in these experiences. There is no sense that He is to be a recipient in the coming Kingdom or that He will be endowed with its

⁴⁸ Jackson & Lake, B.C., vol. I, pp. 288f. It was a new emphasis and a new spirit rather than a new doctrine which made Jesus' message the "εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ." Mark 1:14.

⁴⁹ Matthew 5:21ff.

⁵⁰ Matt. 24:35; Mark 1:22.

⁵¹ Matt. 7:29. Vide the contrast between this method of teaching and that of Socrates and Plato in Charles Gore, The Incarnation of the Son of God, pp. 174f.

mercies and glory. On the contrary, with what Denney has aptly termed "the legislative consciousness of Jesus,"⁵² He taught as though He had "the right to declare and even enforce the ultimate laws of human existence."⁵³ It was this ἐξουσία which first impressed itself upon our Lord's hearers, for He taught not as an interpreter but as a legislator, not as a preceptor but as a judge.

In the interpretation of the Law, Christ clearly saw the difference between the precept and the spirit which had inspired it. Whereas the original Mosaic code had become encrusted with tradition and irrelevancies, Jesus pointed out with a simplicity and clarity associated only with a deep understanding of God's purposes what was the divine Will underlying the Law.⁵⁴ But what incensed the hierarchy far more than divergent interpretations of the Law was Christ's proclamation that He had come as its fulfilment and consummation. "Think not that I have come to abolish the law^{and} the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."⁵⁵ "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to

⁵² Denney, Jesus and the Gospel, pp. 224ff.

⁵³ Mackenzie, "Jesus Christ", HERE, vol. 7, pp. 512f.

⁵⁴ "The modern Jew loves to point out that nearly everything Jesus said was said by the Rabbis. . . . It is all there, good, bad and trifling; but there is not that indiscriminate heaping together of things relevant and irrelevant, in the words of Jesus. . . . What Jesus omits counts as well as what he says." T.R. Glover, Jesus in the Experience of Men, p. 183.

⁵⁵ Matthew 5:17.

you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."⁵⁶

If Jesus' teaching created a great stir, His miracles did so even more. The crowds took them as proof of His religious authority, and even though Christ was slow in making any specific Messianic claims for Himself, the people saw at once that here was a man with all the qualities for the position. Indeed, they made at least one attempt to crown Him as king - characteristically, after they had witnessed the miraculous feeding of the five thousand.⁵⁷ The great furor over the miracle stories of the New Testament has somewhat subsided of late, and critical opinion seems much more inclined to accept them as veridical than it was in the past. The ingenious devices used and the theories propounded to escape the supernatural without altering the fundamental story bordered so often on the ridiculous that the present trend of thought was inevitable.⁵⁸ Be that as it may, the

⁵⁶ Matt. 13:16f.; Luke 10:23. Cf. Luke 11:31f. and Matt. 12:6,41f.

⁵⁷ John 6:15.

⁵⁸ Foakes-Jackson is typical of the older view: "Nothing is more perplexing these days than the stories of miracles in the Bible. The fact that people believed them to occur and even saw what seemed to them miracles is beyond dispute; and Jesus, like most religious teachers of antiquity, is credited with abundance of marvelous acts. . . . To many of us they are more valuable as evidences of character than of power." The Rise of Gentile Christianity, p. 57. The current temper is best expressed by Hans Lietzmann: "It serves no purpose to try with meticulous

fact remains that Jesus looked upon His miraculous powers as proof of His special relation to God,⁵⁹ and so they were accepted by the people. Astounding as the miracles were, they are hardly less amazing than the assurance with which they were performed. Only the utmost confidence in His divine power could have allowed our Lord to address the storm with the words, "Peace! Be still!" No wonder the disciples were awestruck as they whispered to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and sea obey Him?"⁶⁰

Equally impressive in the sight of the people were the healing miracles of our Lord, especially those involving evil spirits. In exerting this form of ἐξουσία, He demonstrated His authority over the kingdom of evil itself.⁶¹ Therefore, He accepted as true the testimony of these evil spirits to His divinity,⁶² as well as the testimony of the people. But greatest of all His miracles, certainly the conquest of death itself must be given a

58(cont.) pedantry to determine the 'historical kernel' of the various miracle-stories in the gospels, even if here and there it seems possible. No person of judgment today can any longer doubt that Jesus possessed miraculous power and worked 'miracles' as understood in the ancient sense." The Beginnings of the Christian Church, p. 61. For a good treatment of the arguments pro and con, cf. A.S. Peake, Christianity Its Nature and Its Truth, chap. X "The Miracles of Jesus" and chap. XII "The Resurrection of Jesus."

⁵⁹ Luke 10:21f.

⁶⁰ Mark 4:39ff.; Luke 8:24ff.

⁶¹ Mark 1:27; 2:11f.; 5:8; 9:25; Matt. 4:1-11; 12:27f.

⁶² Mark 3:11.

place of primacy. Our Lord's power was proved at the raising of Lazarus and the widow of Nain's son,⁶³ but His own resurrection from the dead proved to the disciples beyond any cavil that Jesus was the Incarnate Son of God in whom rested all authority.

Despite these mighty acts, however, our Lord never looked on them as being the most important part of His ministry. His attitude is best exemplified in the incident of healing the paralytic. Instead of healing the patient first, He spoke the words, "My son, your sins are forgiven."⁶⁴ This, of course, created the highest indignation among the pious Jews present, for "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Then Jesus answered their thoughts with the retort, "That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . rise, take up your pallet and go home." This was an authority beyond the wildest dreams of Messianism, and the miracle was performed in order to assert it in the most forceful way possible.

Our Lord's authority was not only demonstrated by His teaching and miracles but by personal contact with His disciples. Living as they did with Jesus day after day, they began to absorb some of His radiant vitality. To the question, "Will you also go away?" Peter felt impelled to answer, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have

⁶³ John 11:43f.; Luke 7:12ff.

⁶⁴ Mark 2:1-12. Cf. Luke 7:48ff.

the words of eternal life."⁶⁵ Jesus often stressed the corporate unity, almost amounting to identity, which existed between Himself and His disciples. "The cup that I drink," He said, "you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized."⁶⁶ And again, "It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign those of his household."⁶⁷ This self-identification of Jesus with His people is one of the main themes of the Gospels, and there can be little doubt but that it formed a main root of the subsequent unity of the Church.

It was not only spiritual vigour, however, that the disciples received from Jesus, but physical ἐξουσία as well - power to heal and cast out demons.⁶⁸ This power, however, could be held and employed only as long as they remained in close association with Jesus. He was the only source of their power, and it was to emphasize this fact that Christ used the analogy of the vine and the branches. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abide in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me . . . for apart from me

⁶⁵ John 6:67ff.

⁶⁶ Mark 10:39.

⁶⁷ Matthew 10:25.

⁶⁸ Mark 3:15.

you can do nothing."⁶⁹ For this reason also, in the last night before the crucifixion Jesus gave the Twelve the sacrament of union with Him which thereafter was known as the κυριακὸν δεῖπνον - the Lord's Supper. In this simple act of shared bread and wine was infused the power of God - the ἐξουσία which had been the possession of the earliest followers of our Lord. And because in this sacrament, the believer is united with Christ, it became a symbol of union not only between disciple and Lord but between the disciples themselves.⁷⁰

Such an expression of unity was something quite without parallel in Judaism. Wilfred Knox is very much in error when he compares the Eucharist for the Christians to the Temple sacrifice for the Jews.⁷¹ Superficially,

⁶⁹ John 15:4f. A.B. Bruce has, I believe, completely misrepresented Christ's meaning in this passage when he writes: "The branch abides in the vine structurally; and the vine abides in the branch through its sap vitally. . . . What, then, would one say most nearly corresponded to the structural abiding of the branch in the tree? We reply, abiding in the doctrine of Christ, in the doctrine He taught. . . . In other words, "Abide in Me" means, Hold and profess the truth I have spoken to you, and give yourselves out merely as my witnesses." The Training of the Twelve, pp. 402ff. The disciples, certainly, came to regard this passage in a more mystical sense - a union of their spirits with the Spirit of the Lord. It would be unwise to be more definite than that. Cf. I John 1:3; 2:28; I Peter 1:8.

⁷⁰ Cf. Johannes Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. I, pp. 61ff. "The common meals, whether of groups or (as apparently in Corinth: I Cor. 11:18,22) of the whole community, were, as we have seen, like the sacrificial meals of the Greeks or perhaps the Passover meals of the Jews, not only cult-meals, expressions of the Jesus-cult, but they were above all manifestations of the 'fellowship' of the brethren with one another." p. 66. Also John Oman, Vision and Authority, pp. 142,6; Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 162f.

⁷¹ St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem, pp. 374f. Cf. I Cor. 11:23ff.; 1:10; 5:7f.

it is true, they provided a similar bond insofar as they served to separate those within the group from those without. But the union between the believer and Christ in the sacrament of Communion was far deeper and more immediate than that brought about by the sacrifices for the Jew. It was this sacrament more than anything else which made the early Christians feel the immediate presence of their Lord even after the Ascension.

Thus, if Jesus was the pivot about which His disciples gathered during His lifetime on earth, He was even more central in their thinking after His departure. For only then did they become fully aware of His true identity as the Incarnate Son of the Living God. The life of the Twelve during our Lord's earthly ministry was largely a passive and receptive one. But once Jesus ascended into heaven, they became active propagators of the New Gospel - the "good news" of God's purpose revealed in His Son. The recognized leaders of the little Christian community, as might be expected, were the eleven Apostles. But their prominence rested not on any inherent authority but solely on their close association with their risen Lord and the position of intimacy with Him to which He had chosen them. So natural is this development, in view of Christ's relation to His Church, it is difficult to understand the grounds for Harnack's disparagement of it when he writes:

The authority which the Apostles in this way enjoyed, did not, in any great measure, rest on the remembrance of direct services which

the twelve had rendered to the Gentile Churches. . . . On the contrary, there was a theory operative here regarding the special authority which the twelve enjoyed in the Church at Jerusalem . . . that the tradition about Christ, just because it grew up so quickly, must have been entrusted to eye-witnesses who were commissioned to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world, and who fulfilled that commission. . . . The guarantee that was needed for the "teaching of the Lord" must, finally, be given not by Paul but only by chosen eye-witnesses. The less that was known about them, the easier it was to claim them.⁷²

It was precisely because the infant Church had been left without any formal authority other than allegiance to and union with Christ that those who had shared His earthly life became the acknowledged leaders. All our primitive sources bear witness to this position of the Apostles, and there is no valid reason for questioning their testimony.⁷³ Some such recognized leadership was necessary and desirable.⁷⁴

Christ had forbidden His disciples to become authorities on the exposition of the Law like the Scribes and Pharisees.⁷⁵ Their commission was to bear witness to their

⁷² Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, pp. 160ff.

⁷³ Acts 1:21f.; 2:42; Gal. 2:9; etc.

⁷⁴ "Im Prinzip gab es da keinerlei Autorität, konnte es niemand geben, dem sich die anderen unterordneten. Aber eine 'reine Pneumokratie' war die Urgemeinde eben doch nicht. Ein solcher Zustand war ungetrübt und unverfälscht nicht möglich innerhalb einer Gemeinschaft, die noch auf Erden war und mit irdischen Gegebenheiten rechnen musste. Eine Autorität war eben doch sofort von Anfang an da. Darin muss man Holl unbedingt zustimmen. Die Zwölf waren diese Autorität." Julius Wagenmann, Die Stellung des Apostels Paulus neben den Zwölf., pp. 13f.

Lord and to do so by preaching and healing the sick,⁷⁶ but as Hort has pointed out even this general charge and the moral authority which it implied could not help elevating the Apostles to a high place of authority in government and administration as well.⁷⁷ Nor was their authority spiritual alone. The records give ample proof that Jesus endowed His disciples with power to heal the sick and drive out evil spirits - a power which was used with dramatic effect by Peter and Paul particularly.⁷⁸ But this authority came only after Christ was accepted as Personal Lord. In other words, it was not the result of an incantation whereby the power of a god was brought under the control of a man, but rather it was evidence that a man was under the control of God. When seven sons of a Jewish priest attempted to use the magic name of Jesus over a possessed man, the demon cried out, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" and thereupon the possessed man attacked the would-be healers.⁷⁹

As was to be expected, many unworthy men tried to obtain this power,⁸⁰ and others claimed it falsely.⁸¹ The

⁷⁵ Matthew 23:8-10.

⁷⁶ Luke 10:9; Matt. 28:19f.; Acts 1:8.

⁷⁷ Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, p. 84.

⁷⁸ Peter cures the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple: Acts 3:6; he cures Aeneas from the palsy: Acts 9:34; Paul cures the lame man at Lystra: Acts 14:8ff; and heals the demented slave girl: Acts 16:18. Cf. Denney, Jesus and the Gospel, pp. 220f.

⁷⁹ Acts 19:13-16.

⁸⁰ Cf. Acts 8:9ff.

⁸¹ Revelation 2:2.

criterion for testing the validity of a man's claims to apostolic authority was not just the ability to work miracles; there were thaumaturgists, exorcists, and wonder workers in abundance throughout the Roman Empire of that day. But the chief test was the man's relation to the Lord Jesus and the witness he bore to Him. "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him." (Romans 8:9). Jesus had to be proclaimed as both Messiah and Son of God or Lord;⁸² He had to be accepted as a personal Saviour from sin;⁸³ and His resurrection had to be declared as the central truth of the Gospel.⁸⁴ To the early Church, this was less a matter of doctrine than an evidence of union with Christ. That anyone could hold such beliefs as being dry, irrelevant doctrinaire statements was utterly incomprehensible to them. For the Church was above all a fellowship - a fellowship of men and women who loved and followed the same Lord.⁸⁵

If they were not always looking toward the past or dwelling in the memory of the Galilean and Judaeen days,

⁸² John 16:30; 17:7f.; Acts 2:36; 5:42; 9:20,22; 17:3; I John 2:22f.; 4:14f.; 5:1,5,10ff.; etc.

⁸³ Acts 2:38; 7:59f.; Rom. 5:8; I Cor. 15:3; Eph. 2:5.

⁸⁴ Acts 1:21; 4:33; Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 15:4ff., 20; Phil. 3:10f.; I Peter 1:3; etc.

⁸⁵ Cf. Wernle, The Beginnings of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 102f. I disagree with his contention that the primitive community was not a Church. Flew has ably demonstrated that it was: Jesus and His Church. But that the chief emphasis was on fellowship is beyond question. Note interchangeability of ἐκκλησία and ἀδελφότης : I Peter 2:17; 5:9. Also, use of κοινωμία : I John 1:3.

it was not because the earthly ministry of Jesus meant little to them; it was because He had become a vivid and abiding presence. . . . He was always there . . . guiding them, speaking to them, flooding them with His own risen life and power.⁸⁶

Undoubtedly the most outstanding example of how apostolic authority was expressed is found in Peter. For several reasons, he occupies a privileged place not only in the Church as a whole but among the disciples. He was among the inner three who were closest to Jesus.⁸⁷ It was he who first confessed Jesus to be the Christ or Messiah of God.⁸⁸ He was among the earliest to see the risen Lord.⁸⁹ After the resurrection, Jesus gave him a special commission to "feed My sheep."⁹⁰ And it was he who gave the first open proclamation of the resurrection at Jerusalem.⁹¹ Though all the Apostles had been given authority for moral legislation withⁱⁿ the Church, it was Peter who was most active in its use.⁹² Certainly the daughter Gentile churches looked to Peter for that

⁸⁶ J.S. Stewart, A Man in Christ, pp. 283f.

⁸⁷ Mark 9:2; 13:9; 14:33 and parallel passages in the other Synoptics.

⁸⁸ Matt. 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20.

⁸⁹ I Cor. 15:5; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:12,34.

⁹⁰ John 21:15ff.

⁹¹ Acts 2:14ff.

⁹² Matt. 18:18 and 16:19. These two passages are so interpreted by most commentators. Cf. Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 92f.; F.W. Green, St. Matthew, the Clarendon Bible, p. 204; W.C. Allen, St. Matthew, ICC, p. 177; Weizsäcker, The Apostolic Age, vol. I, pp. 14f.; etc.

recognition which would signal their admission to the larger Christian fellowship. Even Paul quite freely admits Peter's primacy among the Apostles.⁹³ But it is important to note that nowhere does Peter refer to his own superiority over the other Apostles. His only claim to authority derived from a close personal contact with Christ⁹⁴ - a contact, be it emphasized, that he shared with many others.⁹⁵

The crucial passage on Peter's place in the Church is Matthew 16:18ff. Few Biblical verses have excited so much debate and critical analysis as these. The power and claims of the Roman pontificate rest largely on them as does a proper understanding of the Church's function. A number of critical scholars, most recent of which have been Foakes-Jackson and Lake,⁹⁶ deny the authenticity of this passage on the grounds that it is a redaction of Mark 8:27ff. Four objections⁹⁷ to these verses have been brought forward:⁹⁷ First, the only mention of the word ἐκκλησία by Jesus is here and in Matthew 18:17, both of which verses are under suspicion. Second, Jesus preached

⁹³ Galatians 1:18; 2:7ff.

⁹⁴ I Peter 1:1; II Peter 1:1.

⁹⁵ Acts 10:39ff.; I Peter 5:1; II Peter 1:16. Though this authority is not derived from the community as Lake asserts: BC, vol. I, p. 305.

⁹⁶ BC, vol. I, pp. 328ff.

⁹⁷ Olaf Linton, Das Problem der Urkirche in der neueren Forschung, p. 175. Despite these objections, however, Linton is inclined to accept the genuineness of the passage.

an early consummation of the Kingdom of God rather than the establishment of a Church on earth. Third, the attitude of the Church toward Peter makes such an exalted commission improbable.⁹⁸ And last, the term "stone" does not suit the unstable character of Peter.

These objections have been examined with some care by Flew who argues strongly for the authenticity of the passage,⁹⁹ as do most modern conservative exegetes. In brief, it may be stated that the presence of hapaxlegomena does not in itself invalidate a verse unless there are other factors which make its authenticity questionable. Further, while it is true that Jesus envisioned an immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, the care with which He taught His disciples would suggest that a continuing Church after His departure was not incompatible with His idea of the Kingdom.¹⁰⁰ The Roman error of identifying the Kingdom with the visible earthly Church is no more an exaggeration than the attempt to

⁹⁸ "Petrus hat in dem Urchristentum nicht die autoritative Stellung gehabt, die eine solche Auszeichnung durch Jesus mit sich führen musste." Olaf Linton, Op. cit., p. 175. Cf. also pp. 158, 169.

⁹⁹ R.N. Flew, Jesus and His Church, pp. 124ff. Cf. Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, pp. 103f. and K.L. Schmidt, Die Kirche des Urchristentums (1932) from Festgabe für Deissmann, 1926, pp. 259-319 for a full discussion of the problems involved.

¹⁰⁰ Such passages as Matt. 11:24 with its prediction of an imminent return are balanced by the Little Apocalypse in Matt. 24:3ff. with its keynote: ". . . but the τέλος is not yet." and "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the τέλος will come."

make the Kingdom idea entirely eschatological.¹⁰¹ While the Kingdom would not be consummated until the τέλος, it had already been inaugurated by the coming of Christ. Its exact relation to the Church is still subject to several interpretations and quite possibly may never be settled to the satisfaction of all. But some median position between the above two extremes is most likely the true one. The Church is the earthly organization of which the Kingdom is the spiritual reality. It is conceivable that a person could be admitted to the Kingdom without belonging to the Church; and conversely, membership in the Church does not necessarily guarantee citizenship in the Kingdom. But by and large, Jesus undoubtedly thought of the citizen in His Kingdom as sharing in the fellowship of His Church. Since His chief interest while on earth was in the transmitting of spiritual truth rather than in developing an organization, it is to be expected that He would give most of His time to implanting the idea of the Kingdom. Once that was accomplished, the organization of the Church would follow almost as a matter of course.¹⁰²

The third objection to the passage - that the attitude of the Church makes such a commission impossible - emphasizes but one of the two facets in Christ's unique

¹⁰¹ As C.H. Dodd and other proponents of the "realized eschatology" school attempt to do. Cf. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom.

¹⁰² This subject is much too involved to discuss adequately here. I agree substantially with the position of James Orr. For a detailed exposition, vide his article "Kingdom of God", HDB, vol. II, pp. 844-856.

charge. It is true that whatever our Lord may have meant by His statement, the Church never took it as conveying autocratic power. But at the same time, Peter was almost universally accorded a place of supreme respect in the Church. His only near rival for primacy was James, the Lord's brother. Among the Gentile churches, certainly, he was the best known of the Twelve. On the other hand, we find Peter having to defend his actions in the case of Cornelius to a council of the Church.¹⁰³ Nor did this seem out place to the rest of the Christian community. For Peter's authority rested solely with the Lord who had given him the keys of the Kingdom in the first place. It was not necessary for Peter to mediate Christ to the rest; each Christian felt personally joined to Him even after His ascension. The last objection that Peter's character was not "stone" like is too weak to bear comment. Our Lord referred not to Peter as he then was, but to Peter later to become chief of the Apostles.

One further word about Peter as the rock: it is an unfortunate sophistry inspired by a desire to unsettle the Roman claims which asserts that it was the confession rather than Peter to whom Christ attached the term "rock."¹⁰⁴ The correct interpretation is probably the

¹⁰³ Acts 11:1-18. Cf. Gal. 2:11.

¹⁰⁴ As does A.B. Bruce, The Training of the Twelve, pp. 163ff. among others. Though this interpretation goes back to the time of the Church Fathers, it gained wide acceptance only after the Reformation. Such an interpretation is invalidated by the fact that Peter's confession was wholly inadequate, since it included neither the Resurrection nor the divinity of Jesus. It was the greatest

most obvious one - that Peter himself is the rock. But Harnack points out that "The actual charismatic primacy of Peter is something which cannot be looked upon as transferable, unless for Peter's benefit we do violence to the fundamental conditions and principles of the growing Church."¹⁰⁵ There is no trace of such a transfer either in theory or in practice even as late as the end of the second century.

That the authority of Peter and the other Apostles rested entirely on their association with Christ is further attested by the anomalous position of James in the primitive Church. His influence is totally without explanation apart from his blood relationship to Jesus.¹⁰⁶ Not having accepted his Brother's claims before the crucifixion, James was not numbered among the Twelve or even the outer circle of disciples. Despite this fact, however, he climbed to a position second to none save Peter in the Jerusalem Church. It was James who presided at the second council of Jerusalem and gave the final decision for the whole group. After Peter left the city, James became the acknowledged head or first "bishop" in the Church there.

¹⁰⁴(cont.) advance in the conception of Jesus up to that time, but it was not sufficient for the erection of a Church. Cf. F.H. Chase, "Peter (Simon)", HDB, vol. III, p. 759 and Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, pp. 16f.

¹⁰⁵ Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church, p. 8. Cf. also Flew, Jesus and His Church, pp. 124ff.

¹⁰⁶ Unless the special post-resurrection appearance to James (I Cor. 15:7) supplies the reason. This, however, would but constitute another extraordinary relationship to the Lord which is the basis of his apostolic authority.

Still more strange, there is not the slightest evidence of friction or jealousy aroused by James' sudden rise to prominence. Can there be any doubt that this universal acknowledgment of James' right to rule is based upon a personal relationship to Jesus? After the death of James we are not surprised, therefore, to find his place taken by Simeon, a cousin of Jesus, and thus also bound with blood ties to the Lord.¹⁰⁷

At the other extreme in relationship to Christ we find the Apostle Paul. Far from being a relative or even a disciple, Paul was openly antagonistic to Jesus and His mission right from the start. We do not know whether the two ever met personally, except, perhaps, at a distance.¹⁰⁸ But so great were the differences separating them that a number of critical historians have asserted that Paul's Christology had nothing whatever to do with the historical Jesus.¹⁰⁹ That this is entirely wrong is evidenced by

¹⁰⁷ Eusebius, H.E., II:11. Cf. Wagenmann, Die Stellung des Apostels Paulus neben den Zwölf, pp. 15ff. and Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church, pp. 31ff.

¹⁰⁸ Opinion is quite divided on the matter. Wrede, Deissmann, and Feine are sure that Paul never saw Jesus in the flesh. On the other hand, J.H. Moulton, J. Weiss, Eousset, and Lietzmann, and C.A. Scott think it possible and even probable that he did.

¹⁰⁹ W. Wrede says Paul learned very little about Jesus from the Apostles and that his Christology came largely from his own head and to a great extent antedated his conversion. "Paul believed in a celestial being, in a divine Christ, before he believed in Jesus." Paul, pp. 151f. So Pfeleiderer, Paulinism, vol. I, pp. 123f. These contentions are answered conclusively by J. Weiss, Paul and Jesus, pp. 17ff. 25ff.; The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. I, pp. 188f.; Deissmann, The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul, pp. 187ff.; and C.A. Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul, pp. 11f.

the fact that the Apostles at Jerusalem never disagreed with Paul's doctrine of Christ. On the contrary, they gave him the "right hand of fellowship,"¹¹⁰ to indicate complete agreement with this aspect of his preaching. It was not Paul's Christology they questioned but his attitude toward the Law, and his apostolic authority to preach his views. There is probably a kernel of truth¹¹¹ in Baur's contention that the meeting of the Apostles and Paul at Jerusalem was far stormier than Acts 15 would suggest.¹¹¹ The Twelve were naturally eager to keep the Gospel entrusted to them in its simple unadorned state. Further, the requisites for apostleship were fairly well agreed upon: discipleship before the crucifixion and witnessing the Resurrection afterwards. Though Paul claimed to have met the Lord in His resurrection body (and he may have witnessed the crucifixion), these qualifications were not considered sufficient by the other Apostles. Quite simply, he did not conform to the requirement *Χριστοῦ εἶναι* as they did. Against these charges, Paul vigorously asserted his apostolic authority. Writing to the Corinthians, he cried out passionately, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my

¹¹⁰ Galatians 2:9.

¹¹¹ From the evidence of Gal. 2. F.C. Baur, Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi, pp. 104ff.

apostleship in the Lord."¹¹²

The basis for his authority, then, was a personal relationship to Christ. He claimed a direct commission from Jesus to do the work of an apostle: "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ."¹¹³ For this reason Paul did not consider himself in the least inferior to the other Apostles, and he insisted on his right to equal authority with them.¹¹⁴ As has been pointed out, the early Church did not consider Christ as having left them at the Ascension. On the contrary, He continued to live with them, teach them, strengthen them, and lead them; at the daily ritual of the

¹¹² I Cor. 9:1f. Cf. II Cor. 10:3,7; 11:4f.; 12:11; Gal. 1:1-16; 2:6,8f. Also vide Pfleiderer, Paulinism, vol. II, pp. 26ff.

¹¹³ Gal. 2:11f. Cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; 15:8ff.; II Cor. 1:1,21; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1,12f.; 2:7; II Tim. 1:1,11f.; Titus 1:1ff.

¹¹⁴ I Cor. 11:5f. As Julius Wagenmann has put it forcefully, "Was die Urapostel dürfen, dürfen sie [Paulus] auch! Aber dadurch erhebt er ungewollt und unbewusst diese ihm gleichstehenden Apostel zu Vorbildern und Mustern, nach denen er sich richten kann. Und seine Meinung: was denen erlaubt ist, ist auch mir erlaubt, erscheint so, als ob er sagte: denn weil denen etwas erlaubt ist, ist es auch mir erlaubt! . . . Weil die Gegner sich hier wie dort auf die Jerusalemer Autoritäten beriefen, musste auch Paulus es tun. Er ruft sie zu Zeugen für sich an, stellt sich auf eine Stufe mit ihnen - und macht sie dadurch doch zu Autoritäten, die ihn decken und schützen müssen!" And this was true despite I Cor. 15:9! Die Stellung des Apostels Paulus neben den Zwölf, p. 39. Cf. II Cor. 12:11; Eph. 3:7f.; II Cor. 2:17.

κυριακὸν δεῖπνον it was He who gave them the precious bread and wine; at the common services of worship it was His Spirit that warmed their hearts and filled them with hope. Only, the Apostles felt the full enjoyment of this relationship was reserved for those who had known Jesus in the flesh. Later converts "devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship,"¹¹⁵ as the only way to meet the Lord. Then came Paul with his claims of an immediate, personal call to service which made any mediation outside of Christ totally unnecessary. Even though he had had almost no contact with Jesus before the Damascus road, that single experience of conversion united him to Christ in such a way that from then on he was "a man in Christ."¹¹⁶

This revolutionary relationship was developed by Paul far beyond the relatively simple conception of union with Christ found in the early Church. In fact it became the focal point of Pauline theology, the center from which everything else radiated. The nature of this union is important - it was not a mere intellectual concept, nor should it be construed as simply a moral union. Its meaning was far deeper than that. The language of the Pauline Epistles forces us to the conclusion that Paul

¹¹⁵ Acts 2:42.

¹¹⁶ II Cor. 12:2. "The heart of Paul's religion is union with Christ. This more than any other conception - more than justification, more than sanctification, more even than reconciliation - is the key which unlocks the secrets of his soul." J.S. Stewart, A Man in Christ, p. 147. Cf. Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:1; I Cor. 6:17.

spoke of a profound mystical union involving body as well as soul, heart as well as mind.¹¹⁷ It is quite an error, then, to equate this kind of union with a type of higher "gnosis" thus linking it up with the Gnosticism of a later day.¹¹⁸ For one thing, the Pauline idea of union with Christ included such ungnostic elements as the emotions and the physical body. The Apostle felt that Jesus was present in every tissue of his body as well as in the mind,¹¹⁹ which made bodily purity as necessary as mental rectitude. And the passionate eloquence he uses when speaking of his Lord proves that Christ was apprehended as much by the emotions as by the mind.¹²⁰

A further reason why this union with Christ was not by special "gnosis" is that for Paul the initiative lay not with himself but with God. It was not he who stormed the gates of heaven armed with esoteric knowledge, but it was the Son of God Incarnate who came down to search for

¹¹⁷ Rom. 6:3,5,8; 8:9f.,35f.; 13:14; I Cor. 16:15f.; II Cor. 4:10; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21. Cf. A.S. Peake, Christianity Its Nature and Truth, pp. 286ff.

¹¹⁸ As Wernle tries to do. Vide his Beginnings of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 331ff. Cf. Deissmann, Paul, pp. 135f. "It is no doubt generally admitted that Paul's religious experience was Christo-centric. . . . Often Christo-centric has been identified with Christological. But Paul's religion is Christo-centric in a much deeper and more realistic sense. It is not first of all the product of a number of convictions and elevated doctrines about Christ; it is 'fellowship' with Christ, Christ intimacy [German: Christ-Innigkeit]." I Cor. 1:9; 10:16; Phil. 3:10,21; Col. 1:29; Eph. 1:19; II Cor. 12:9.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Rom. 8:11; 12:1 and I Cor. 6:19; 9:27. The word $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ is not to be confused with the Pauline idea of $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\iota\varsigma$, which is a totally different matter.

¹²⁰ Rom. 8:35ff.; Col. 1:15ff.; Phil. 3:7f.

and to find him.¹²¹ Granted that he had to make the surrender, it was Jesus who made the initial move and who gathered up the believer in Himself. Thus the Christian not only came to share in the glory of his Lord, but he entered into the sufferings as well. Through the sacrament of baptism, a believer dies to the world and is raised up with Christ thereby being freed from the power of sin and bondage to the Law; ultimately, it means assurance of participation in the final resurrection.¹²² In a sense, as Schweitzer points out, this resurrection has already begun at conversion which places Christ in a truly eschatological relation to His Church.¹²³ Thus a Christian is marked off from the rest of the world not only by a new quality for the present, but he also contains the germinated seeds of immortality which can be found nowhere but in Christ.

Jesus was not only a historical character set in a particular place at a specific time in history, nor was He simply the Incarnation of God, but He was the typical or universal man, the Second Adam.¹²⁴ He had approximately the same significance for the new race of the redeemed as

¹²¹ Gal. 1:15f. Cf. Stewart, A Man in Christ, p. 164.

¹²² Gal. 2:19f.; 3:26ff.; 5:24f.; 6:14; II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:8ff.; 7:4. Cf. A.S. Peake, Christianity Its Nature and Truth, pp. 286ff. and Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p. 3.

¹²³ Schweitzer, Op. cit., pp. 110ff. from I Thess. 5:9f.

¹²⁴ I Cor. 15:21f.; Rom. 5:12ff. Cf. Denney, Jesus and the Gospel, p. 33.

the first Adam had for the old, though Paul took care not to press the analogy too far; certainly, he felt a far closer relationship to Christ than any man can have with the first Adam. The first Adam died and has passed away, but the Second Adam is alive for evermore.

Despite Paul's intense feeling of complete union with Christ, it should be remembered that he was no pantheist.¹²⁵ Though he lived in Christ, and Christ lived in him, there is no sense of personality absorption or a loss of identity. Even after his conversion, Paul was no automaton who unthinkingly went through a prescribed routine. This oneness with the Lord only heightened Paul's peculiar abilities and characteristics. Nor did his relation to Christ make him withdraw from the world. Few men have demonstrated as much common sense in confronting practical problems as he did. In all his correspondence with the newly founded churches of Asia Minor and Europe there is a delicate balance between lofty disquisitions on the nature of Christ and specific recommendations for meeting some local difficulty. And the two are kept closely related. Kaftan was not wrong when he said:

Weshalb es auch so wichtig ist, dass
Paul unser Vorbild und Führer im

¹²⁵ As Bousset remarks, "Es ist ausserordentlich charakteristische, dass, so oft er auch von einem εἶναι ἐν Χριστῷ und von einem Wohnen Christi in uns redet, er die Wendungen εἶναι ἐν Θεῷ, Θεός ἐστι (οἰκεῖ) ἐν ἡμῖν so gut wie gar nicht kennt." Kyrios Christos, p. 119. cf. Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p. 3.

Glauben an Jesus Christus bleibt.
 Zwischen diesen beiden Punkten, der
 Erlösung von der Welt durch die
 mystische Einheit mit Christus und
 dem praktischen Gehorsam in der
 Hingabe an die weltlichen Pflich-
 ten, oszilliert das innere Leben,
 das da Christentum heisst.¹²⁶

When Paul's idea of union with Christ is under-
 stood, then his concept of Church unity follows as a
 matter of course. The focal point for the individual is
 also the focal point for the Church. Unity is not estab-
 lished by getting Christians to conform to one another,
 nor is it a matter of cooperation and compromise. The
 secret lies in relating all Christians to Christ and
 conforming together to His will. Paul would question if
 any believer could have real fellowship with another
 apart from the fellowship in Christ. To clarify and
 illustrate this view, Paul in speaking of the Church
 makes use of the phrase: $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$. Even as the
 head of the human body regulates all the parts, so does
 Christ regulate His Church. The body dies without the
 head, and the members can be related to one another only
 as long as they accept the lordship of the head.¹²⁷ It
 is only as a member of Christ's body that a Christian
 can war victoriously against sin, can overcome evil, or

¹²⁶ Julius Kaftan, Jesus und Paulus, p. 51. Cf.
 J.S. Stewart, A Man in Christ, p. 166.

¹²⁷ Rom. 12:4f.; I Cor. 6:15f.; 10:16f.; 12:12ff.;
 Eph. 1:23; 2:16; 4:4ff.; 5:30; Col. 1:18; 3:15. Cf.
 treatment of this in Weizsäcker, The Apostolic Age, vol.
 II, pp. 307f.

even can "love the brotherhood."¹²⁸

Paul never clearly differentiated the visible from the invisible Church - it was all one in Christ. To be sure, he regarded the Christian as perfected only after death and so in that sense the Church of the saints on earth could not approach the perfect unity with Christ achieved by the saints in heaven. And yet, since the Lord had conquered death and sin, the distinction between the earthly and the heavenly saints was a quantitative rather than a qualitative one. This problem arose among the Thessalonians after the death of a number of the older church members. The Apostle quieted their fears by proclaiming that at the Second Coming, both living and dead saints would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.¹²⁹ Across the barrier of death it is again Christ who unifies the whole Church. In Him we are one - both living and dead.

If Paul made no sharp distinction between the living and the dead in the Church, neither did he anticipate any differentiation between Christians inside the Church and those outside. To Paul there was no such thing as a believer outside the Church - that would be a contradiction in terms. For the Church was not an association of individuals who gathered together because they agreed with one another on certain points of

¹²⁸ I Peter 2:17. Cf. Gal. 3:26f.; Col. 3:3,11; Rom. 14:7. Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 155f.

¹²⁹ I Thess. 4:13ff. Cf. I Cor. 15:51ff.

doctrine or on special modes of conducting public worship. It was primarily a fellowship of men who had accepted the Lordship of Christ. The *κοινωνία* within the Church is only an expression of the union with Christ. Therefore, if anyone refused to join in the fellowship of the Church, it would cast a serious reflection on the nature of his relationship to the Lord. In the Church at Corinth factions appeared centering around outstanding personalities: Peter, Paul, Apollos. But the stinging rebuke in Paul's First Epistle called the erring ones to an acknowledgment that it was Christ who united them and not any human agency.¹³⁰ Therefore, any question of belief or conduct was to be subjected to the Will of Christ in whose Name they had been baptized.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, which can almost be described as Paul's great book on the Church, there is no hint that the *ἐκκλησία* is made up of many local churches.¹³¹ The unity of the Church exists not among partial churches but among Christians who have a direct relation to their Lord. Or as Hort describes it: "The members which make up the One Ecclesia are not communities but individual men. The One Ecclesia included all members of all partial Ecclesiae; but its relations to them are all direct, not mediate."¹³²

¹³⁰ I Corinthians 1:10-13.

¹³¹ Vide esp. Eph. 4. On this cf. Gore, *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, pp. 32f.

¹³² Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, pp. 168f. Cf. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, pp. 13f.

This, then, is the essence of Church unity during the first few years of its history. Jesus who proclaimed Himself as both Messiah and Son of God not only believed in His own unique mission but imparted that faith to His disciples and through them to the Church. The Gospel which the Church preached centered around Christ's resurrection. The authority exercised by the Apostles and claimed by Paul was derived directly from Christ and depended on an unbroken communion with Him for its continuity. These facts obviously negate Weiss' contention that, as opposed to the mystery cults, the Christian Church found its center in God.¹³³ Of course the Jewish veneration of and sense of dependence upon God was not summarily abandoned, but it was Christ crucified, risen and ascended whom they preached, and it was in His Name they gathered.

Equally misleading is the statement by Lindsay that:

The Church of Christ is such a unity that it has thrown down all the walls of race, sex, and social usages which have kept men separate (Gal. 3:28). It has reconciled Jew and Gentile. It has bridged the gulf between the past of Israel and the present of apostolic Christianity (Rom. 11:17).¹³⁴

¹³³ "Where reference is made to an organized body, nearly always God is preferred as the unifying point." J. Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. II, pp. 618f.

¹³⁴ Lindsay, Op. cit., p. 12. Cf. P. Carnegie Simpson, The Evangelical Church Catholic, pp. 162f. for a corrective to this. Though I Clement begins with the words, "The Church of God which sojourns at Rome to the Church of God sojourning at Corinth," it concludes the sentence, "sanctified by the will of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." [emphasis mine] Further, in chap. 38

It would be equally true to say that a cathedral was built by a trowel or that the Sistine Madonna was painted by a brush! It was not the Church which accomplished these social and historical developments, but the power of Christ working through the Church. In fact, had it not been for the sinful pride and intransigent willfulness of the Church, these revolutionary changes would have been accomplished in far less time and with far greater thoroughness than has been the case. Only insofar as the Church has maintained unity with her Lord has it been able to demonstrate an inner unity to the world. It was a conviction born out^{of} practical experience which led the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews to say: "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. . . ."135

134(cont.) he writes: "Let our whole body, then, be preserved in Christ Jesus." Vide also chap. 48.

135 Hebrews 12:1f. So also I Peter 2:4.

Chapter III

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

"Ubi enim Ecclesiam, ibi et Spiritus Dei;
et ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia, et
omnia gratia."¹

That Christ is the Head of His Church and therefore in a very real sense the focus of its existence is a fact of history which cannot be gainsaid. Long after the apostolic age when all the eyewitnesses of the Lord had been supplanted by second and third generation Christians, Ignatius could write of Christ: "He is the door of the Father, through which enter Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the Prophets and the Apostles and the Church. All these things are joined in the unity of God."² Nor was such language exceptional for his age. Clement writing to the Christian Church at Corinth did so "through our Lord Jesus Christ."³ He expressed the pious wish, "Let our whole body, then, be preserved in Christ Jesus,"⁴ and he pleaded with them, "Let us fall down before the Master and beseech Him with tears, that He would become

¹ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:24:1.

² Ignatius, Philad., IX:1. Αὐτὸς ὢν θύρα τοῦ πατρὸς, δι' ἧς εἰσέρχονται Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ οἱ προφῆται καὶ ἀπόστολοι καὶ ἡ ἐκκλησία. πάντα ταῦτα εἰς ἐνότητα Θεοῦ.

³ I Clement, prol. διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

⁴ Ibid., 38. Σωζέσθω οὖν ἡμῶν ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

merciful to us."⁵ The author of the Martyrdom of Polycarp writes of the dead saint, "And he is blessing our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls, and Governor of our bodies, and the Shepherd of the Catholic Church throughout the world."⁶ Indeed, such expressions of dependence upon Christ might be adduced from the writings of almost all the Apostolic Fathers.⁷

Despite this fact, however, there is a quite noticeable shift in emphasis from the Lord Jesus, who had walked and communed with His disciples by the shores of Galilee, to the Risen and Glorified Christ, who, as Judge and King of the universe, was to be worshipped and served from afar. Two major elements contributed to this shift: first was the presence in the Church of a great many new converts who had never known Christ in the flesh. Peter could write to them, "Without having seen Him you love Him; though you do not now see Him you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy."⁸ But this only accentuated the fact that Peter's

⁵ I Clement, 48. προσπέσωμεν τῷ δεσπότῃ καὶ κλαύσωμεν ἱκετεύοντες αὐτόν, ὅπως ἡλεῶς γενόμενος ἐπικαταλλαχῇ ἡμῖν.

⁶ Mart. Polyc., XIX:2. καὶ εὐλογεῖ τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν σωτῆρα τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν καὶ κυβερνήτην τῶν σωμάτων ἡμῶν καὶ ποιμένα τῆς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας.

⁷ Cf. Mart. Polyc., IX; Ignatius, Eph., VI:2; X:3; I Clement, VII:4; XVI:17; II Clement, I:3-7; Hermas, Vis., III:3; Clem. Alex., Cohort. ad Gent., IX.

⁸ I Peter 1:8. Cf. also 1:2.

faith had to be different from that of these new converts, for Peter was an eyewitness of the Lord. As death gradually reduced the number of those who had known Jesus personally, it was inevitable that the historic Christ should slowly give way in the consciousness of the Church to the picture of the aura-crowned Son seated at the right hand of the Father.

Another even more significant element, however, which led to this shift was the amazing outbreak of energy within the Church attributed to the activity of the Holy Spirit. Contrary to what some theologians would lead us to suppose, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity developed not as a result of abstract speculation but from the practical experience of the early Christian community. So real and so immediate was this first revelation of the Spirit within the Church that it soon became the practical unifying force of the entire body.⁹ The Apostles and other leaders were Spirit-filled men. The decisions of the community were made under the direction of the Spirit. So it was personal experience which drove these early Christians to place the Spirit within the Deity.

Of course, though the occurrence at Pentecost was in every way unique for the Apostles, they were not

⁹ Supplanting the Law, which was the chief unifying element of the Jews; and Christ, who had been the unity of the band of disciples. Cf. J. Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. I, pp. 162, 299ff. Vide also Appendix B.

unacquainted with the idea of the Spirit.¹⁰ As all pious Jews, they knew of the Spirit's activity in the Old Testament, particularly as inspirer of the prophets and writers of the Holy Scriptures. Jesus spoke quite frequently of the Spirit toward the end of His earthly ministry,¹¹ so His followers were not completely unprepared for what happened. They were told that "when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that

¹⁰ For a linguistic treatment, cf. E. Burton, Spirit, Soul and Flesh; K. Lake, "The Holy Spirit", BC, vol. V, pp. 96ff.; and R.B. Hoyle, "Spirit of God", HERE, vol. 11, pp. 784ff.

¹¹ This despite E.F. Scott, The Spirit in the New Testament, p. 77: "It may confidently be inferred that the Spirit was not a primary conception with Jesus. . . . There is no indication that he thought of his teaching, or his relation to God, or the new life he offered to men, in terms of the Spirit." Obviously Prof. Scott places very little credence in the authenticity of the Johannine discourses on the Spirit. With this view I cannot agree. Bishop Gore comes much closer to the truth when he says, "It is, I think, difficult to imagine that our Lord did not give His disciples some such preparatory teaching about the gift of the Holy Spirit as is conveyed in His last discourses before His passion according to St. John. And the teaching of these discourses is at once so original, so profound, and so singularly well adapted to the situation of the moment, that we are led to believe that it is not an imaginative construction by the evangelist, but a real memory." The Holy Spirit and the Church, p. 111. The Johannine problem is much too vast for even a limited treatment here. For an outline of the issues involved, cf. the principal commentaries on John, especially Walter Bauer, Das Johannes-Evangelium in Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, pp. 180ff. & 188ff.; Holtzmann, Hand-commentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. IV, pp. 23ff. & 251ff.; Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, pp. lxiii ff.; Bernard, St. John, ICC, vol. II, pp. 553ff.; and G.H.C. McGregor, The Gospel of St. John, MNTC, pp. xx ff. and 295ff.

very hour what you ought to say."¹² Nicodemus was warned that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."¹³ But it was in the intimate circle of the Twelve gathered together for His last supper that our Lord spoke most fully of the Spirit. Within the shadow of the cross, the Master sought to bridge the tragedy of the next few hours by promising His little band an unseen Comforter: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."¹⁴ "But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you."¹⁵ This would not be an evanescent experience for times of crisis alone, but as Jesus explained, the Paraclete was "to be with you forever."¹⁶ Two other words of the Lord made recognition of the Spirit a certainty. It was to be a Spirit of Power,¹⁷ and it was to come upon the disciples in Jerusalem after Christ had left them.¹⁸

¹² Luke 12:11f. Cf. the interesting variant of this in 21:15.

¹³ John 3:5. Cf. Mark 1:8; John 4:23f.; 7:37-39.

¹⁴ John 16:7.

¹⁵ John 14:26. Cf. 15:26; 16:13-15.

¹⁶ John 4:16.

¹⁷ Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.

¹⁸ Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4f. There is another tradition contained in the Johannine account (John 20:22) that the Spirit was given on the evening of the first Easter Day. But as the other evangelists say nothing of this event, the account in Luke is probably the more reliable of the two. Cf. BC, vol. I, pp. 322f.; Flew, Jesus and His Church, p. 145.

Thus when the heavenly fire fell at Pentecost, it brought with it not only a tremendous spiritual energy but also an overpowering sense of joy. The disciples who had witnessed the departure of their Lord felt united with Him once more through the Spirit. The old fellowship between Master and follower was unbroken; the intimate relationship of Teacher and disciple remained unchanged. Each new believer as he received the Spirit and joined the Christian community felt he was related to Christ even though he had never met Him in the flesh. In the words of Schweitzer, "The Holy Spirit, therefore, comes to the believer from Christ and as the Spirit of Christ. It is through the being-in-Christ that they have part in it. Not as natural men, but as those who are actually dying and rising again with Christ, are they vehicles of the Spirit."¹⁹ Irenaeus expressed much the same thought when he said:

These things, therefore, He [Jesus] recapitulates in Himself: by uniting man to the Spirit, and causing the Spirit to dwell in man, He is Himself made the head of the Spirit, and gives the Spirit to be the head of the man: for through Him [the Spirit] we see, and hear and speak.²⁰

¹⁹ Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p. 165.

²⁰ "Haec igitur in semetipsum recapitulatus, adunans hominem spiritui, et spiritum collocans in homine, ipse caput spiritus factus est; et spiritum dans esse hominis caput: per illum enim vidimus et audivimus et loquimur." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., V:20:2.

Though there was a keen sense of the Spirit's presence, however, it was a long time before there^{was} any understanding of how it fitted into the theological framework of the faith. The Jewish horror of polytheism protected early Christian thinkers from the error of tri-theism, but there was a definite tendency to identify Christ and the Spirit. Even so acute a mind as Paul stated unequivocally, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit is, there is freedom. . . . for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."²¹ And again he writes, "For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance."²² Though, as C. Anderson Scott points out, this Pauline relation of Christ and the Spirit "is not so much a personal identity as an equivalence of function,"²³ the language used could not help but produce an ambiguous impression^{on} its first readers. In one short verse we find ἐν πνεύματι, πνεῦμα θεοῦ, and πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ²⁴ all tumbled together in such a fashion that the terms could be used quite well interchangeably. In fact that is the general impression one gets from seeing how Paul uses these terms elsewhere in his epistles.²⁵ At the same

²¹ II Corinthians 3:17f.

²² Philippians 1:19.

²³ C.A. Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul, p. 260.

²⁴ Romans 8:9.

²⁵ E.g. I Cor. 2:4; I Thess. 1:5 and II Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13.

time there are other passages where a distinction is more clearly drawn, as when he writes: "But when the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."²⁶

It should be born in mind, of course, that when Paul was penning his epistles he was not consciously writing a work in systematic theology so some ambiguities are to be expected. It is the more wonder that he is as precise and careful in his use of terms as he is! In his own experience the Spirit and Christ were inextricably bound up together. He attributed the same qualities, even the same personality to both,²⁷ though it is doubtless wrong to say Paul regarded them as identical.²⁸

There is no question, however, that later writers

²⁶ Titus 3:4. Cf. Eph. 4:4. Contrast the precise distinction between Christ and the Spirit in I Peter 1:2.

²⁷ On this see the fine note by C.A. Scott, Op. cit., pp. 260f.; also Deissmann, Paul, pp. 138f.; T.R. Glover, Paul of Tarsus, p. 219; Schweitzer, Op. cit., pp. 165f.

²⁸ Cf. J.S. Stewart, A Man in Christ, p. 156: "Paul's thought of the living Christ is so closely bound up with his thought of the Holy Spirit that he seems on occasion to use the two names almost interchangeably. To say this is not to agree with Weiss when he declares that Christ and the Spirit are simply identified (Das Urchristentum, 356). The New Testament doctrine is that it is the Spirit who makes Christ real to us and mediates Christ's gifts to us: and this is not 'identity'. Still, so close are the ideas of Christ and the Spirit in Paul's mind that he can pass almost without any sense of distinction from the one to the other."

did identify the two. Hermas, writing in the first half of the second century, announces: "The Holy Spirit which goes forth, which created all creation, did God make to dwell in the flesh which he willed. Therefore this flesh, in which the Holy Spirit dwelled, served the Spirit well."²⁹ And again, "I wish to show you what the Holy Spirit which spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you," for that Spirit is the Son of God."³⁰ What is even more surprising is to find a philosophical thinker like Justin Martyr making statements such as this: "It is wrong to understand the Spirit and the power of God as anything else than the Logos who is also God's first born."³¹

²⁹ Hermas, Sim., V:6:5. τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ προόν, τὸ κτίσαν πᾶσαν τὴν κτίσιν, κατώκισεν, ὁ θεὸς εἰς σάρκα, ἣν ἠβούλετο· αὕτη οὖν ἡ σὰρξ, ἐν ᾗ κατώκησε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ἐδούλευσε τῷ πνεύματι καλῶς.

Cf. following passage also. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 73.

³⁰ Hermas, Sim., IX:1:1. Θέλω σοι δεῖξαι, ὅσα σοι ἔδειξε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τὸ λαλήσαν μετὰ σοῦ ἐν μορφῇ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας· ἐκεῖνο γὰρ τὸ πνεῦμα ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν.

Cf. II Clement, IX:5; XIV:2-5; Theophilus, Ad Autolycus, II:10. It should be borne in mind, again, that these were not accurate formulations of a doctrine of the Trinity but rather a cautious feeling after truth. Vide H.B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, pp. 28ff.

³¹ Justin, Apol., I:33. Τὸ Πνεῦμα οὖν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐδὲν ἄλλο νοῆσαι θέμις, ἢ τὸν Λόγον, ὅς καὶ πρωτότοκος τῷ θεῷ ἐστὶ. . . .

Justin also represents the Logos as speaking through the prophets (Apol., I:36), a function usually ascribed to the Spirit. "The Spirit, indeed, so far as it appears

During this period when the precise definition of the faith was still in a very fluid state, the close association of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the thought of the Church led practically to increased dependence upon the latter. When at Pentecost the divine *δύναμις* was poured out on the Christian community, it was received with rejoicing not only because it emboldened the Church to stand up against all the powers of heathendom, but it gave the conclusive proof of who was a Christian and who was not. The Apostles suddenly saw the significance of Jesus' words at the last supper: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you."³² To be a Christian, then, meant being possessed by the Spirit. Hence, at the end of Peter's first sermon, he exhorted his hearers to repent and be baptized, "and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."³³ The same power

³¹(cont.) from Justin's writings, had no peculiar function as distinct from the Logos or Son. . . . Had it not been for the three-fold baptismal formula he would doubtless have contented himself with two divine beings, God the Father, and the Logos or Spirit or Son of God who became incarnate in Christ; and the same may be said of the Church after his day." A.C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, vol. I, pp. 111f. Cf. H.B. Swete, The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, pp. 35ff.

³² John 14:16f. Cf. I John 3:24; 4:13.

³³ Acts 2:38.

which fell on all the believers in the upper room³⁴ fell on each new convert to the faith. There would be differences of gifts within the Church, but at least all could lay claim to this the greatest endowment of all - the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

So great was the contrast between the impotent band of disciples and the power of God which flooded over them that they attributed all the decisions of the Church to the direct activity of the Spirit: the Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul to be missionaries;³⁵ It opened the doors of the Church to the Gentiles;³⁶ It freed the Gentile Christians from the yoke of the Law.³⁷ It was while under the possession of the Spirit that the Apostles preached the Word with boldness.³⁸ It was the Spirit who bore witness to God's mighty act of redemption,³⁹ and who comforted the faithful.⁴⁰ The sin of Ananias and Saphira was a sin not against the Church nor the Apostles

³⁴ To infer from Acts 1:8 that the Spirit was "conferred on the Apostles by the risen Jesus, and by the Apostles on the other Christians (BC, vol. V, p. 110)" is to place more weight on the text than it can bear. Acts 2:1,4 with the repetition of πάντες would certainly indicate the Spirit was given directly to all. Cf. Flew, Jesus and His Church, p. 148.

³⁵ Acts 13:2,3.

³⁶ Acts 10:44-48.

³⁷ Acts 15:28.

³⁸ Acts 4:8,13.

³⁹ Acts 5:32.

⁴⁰ Acts 9:31.

nor even God the Father but against the Holy Spirit.⁴¹

In short, the Church was a Spirit-centered community composed of Spirit-centered men and women. Until Jesus returned in triumph, they looked to the Holy Spirit within them to mediate the active grace of God.⁴² As Paul so trenchantly stated it, "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."⁴³

It was Paul, indeed, as much as any man in the early Church who gave concrete expression to this universal experience of the Spirit. When the average Jew thought of the Spirit it was^{as} an instrument of revelation present in the prophets and sages of old.⁴⁴ But this mighty indwelling power that came down at Pentecost went far beyond the spirit of prophecy. By means of it, Paul felt "raised above all the limitations of being-in-the-flesh,"⁴⁵ and was assured of justification in the presence of God. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death."⁴⁶

⁴¹ Acts 5:3,9.

⁴² Cf. Flew, Jesus and His Church, p. 147

⁴³ II Cor. 5:5. For the force of ἀρραβὼν vide Kittel, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. I, p. 474.

⁴⁴ Cf. I Peter 1:10-12; Eph. 3:5.

⁴⁵ Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p. 167. Cf. J. Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. II, p. 577.

⁴⁶ Rom. 8:1f. Cf. Rom. 5:5; 8:9-11, 14-16; Gal. 5:16-18; II Thess. 2:13.

Of course this involved a reinterpretation of traditional beliefs, something which to the frozen legalism of many rabbinic minds was completely anathema. But this reinterpretation made under the compulsion of a tremendous personal experience bore evidence to the creative vitality of the Christian Church. Like their Jewish forebears, subsequent generations of churchmen have often denied Christians the very right of reinterpretation which heralded the genesis of the Church; how much the Church has lost thereby God alone knows.⁴⁷

While the Spirit was a common possession of every Christian - even the slaves and women⁴⁸ - it was never thought of as being a private relationship. Though each believer had direct contact with God through the Spirit, he was also bound to all his brethren in the faith. There was never any question of whether a Christian belonged to the Church or not; by very definition, his Christianity at once drew him into the Christian fellowship. For it was there that the Spirit was normally found.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ On the subject of reinterpretation, cf. R.H. Charles, Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments, pp. 163f.

⁴⁸ On this cf. Harnack, What is Christianity, p. 164.

⁴⁹ The idea of the Spirit working in chosen personalities outside the Church is encountered only among the apologists, and even there quite rarely. Cf. Justin Martyr, Apol., II:10. Σωκράτει μὲν γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἐπιστεύει, ὑπὲρ τούτου τοῦ δόγματος ἀποθνῆσκειν. Χριστῷ δὲ τῷ καὶ ὑπὸ Σωκράτους ἀπὸ μέρους γνωσθέντι (Λόγος γὰρ ἦν καὶ ἔστιν ὁ ἐν παντί ὢν).
Vide A.J. Mason, "Conceptions of the Church in Early Times," The Early History of the Church and the Ministry, pp. 33f.

So strongly was this felt to be true that when the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and all his household, Peter at once laid aside his deep-rooted aversion to contact with a Gentile and baptised him into the full fellowship of the Church. The other apostolic leaders at Jerusalem who had even stronger prejudices to overcome acquiesced when Peter showed irrefragable proof that the Spirit had come upon Cornelius. "When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.'"⁵⁰ This same sense of unity derived from a common reception of the Spirit is found all through the first two centuries. Clement asks, "Have we not . . . one Spirit of grace poured out upon us?"⁵¹ and answers, "Thus a profound and rich peace was given to all . . . and the Holy Spirit was poured out in abundance on you all."⁵² The author of the Epistle of Barnabas acknowledges his fellow Christians by saying, "I truly see in you that the Spirit has been poured out upon you from the Lord who is its rich source."⁵³

⁵⁰ Acts 11:18. Cf. BC, vol. I, pp. 324f.

⁵¹ I Clement, 46:6. οὐχὶ . . . ἔχομεν . . . ἐν πνεύμα τῆς χάριτος τὸ ἐκχυθὲν ἐφ' ἡμᾶς;

⁵² Ibid., 2:2. οὕτως εἰρήνη βαθεῖα καὶ λιπαρὰ ἐδέδοτο πᾶσιν . . . καὶ πλήρης πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐκχυσίς ἐπὶ πάντας ἐγένετο.

⁵³ Barnabas, 1:3. ἀληθῶς βλέπω ἐν ὑμῖν ἐκκεχυμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ πλουσίου τῆς πηγῆς κυρίου πνεῦμα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς.

He then goes on to say, "For He [Christ] came not to call men with respect of persons, but those whom the Spirit prepared."⁵⁴

The rapid expansion of Christianity was due to a great many causes. Converts accepted the new faith for various and diverse reasons as the particular need of each one was met. Harnack has indicated a few of these in his book, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity,⁵⁵ but he completely omits one factor which might well be the most important of all - the contagion of a Spirit-filled life. It was certainly not doctrine nor even knowledge of the Scriptures which brought converts into the Church. The former was as yet in a very incomplete state, and the latter by reason of its extensiveness and unavailability was largely closed to most Gentiles. But the lives of the Christians filled as they were with this spiritual magnetism proved an irresistible attraction to many and awoke deep longings in others.

The life in the Spirit was first of all one of great inner joy. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit,"⁵⁶ wrote Paul to the Church in Galatia;

⁵⁴ Barnabas, XIX:7. ὅτι οὐκ ἦλθεν κατὰ πρόσωπον καλέσαι, ἀλλ' ἐφ' οὓς τὸ πνεῦμα ἠτοίμασεν.

⁵⁵ Vol. I, pp. 86f.

⁵⁶ Galatians 5:22,25.

and elsewhere, "Be aglow with the Spirit."⁵⁷ Luke records that "the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."⁵⁸ "For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but . . . joy in the Holy Spirit."⁵⁹ Such a joy in the midst of a disillusioned and unhappy world was not long in attracting attention and then capturing adherents.

The joy of the Spirit was partially due to a feeling of newness. In Christ, through the Spirit, the old life with its mistakes and sins, its selfishness and greed, its inequalities and injustices would all be laid aside. "And He who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'"⁶⁰ "He who conquers . . . I will write on him the name of my God . . . and my own new name."⁶¹ Not only did possession of the Spirit make the individual a new person, but collectively within the Church, the Spirit created a new nation. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."⁶² Clement refers to the Church as a

⁵⁷ τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες. Rom. 12:11.

⁵⁸ Acts 13:52. Cf. Shepherd of Hermas, Mand., X:3:2 τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ δοθέν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἡλαρόν. Also X:2:1,5.

⁵⁹ Rom. 14:17. Cf. Luke 10:17; John 15:11; 16:20-24; Rom. 15:13; II Cor. 8:2; Eph. 5:18f.; I Thess. 1:6; 3:9; Heb. 13:17; James 1:2; I Peter 1:8; 4:13; I John 1:4; Jude 24; Hermas, Mand., X:3. On this vide, Gore, The Holy Spirit in the Church, p. 121.

⁶⁰ Revelation 21:5.

⁶¹ Rev. 3:12. Cf. Rev. 5:9; 21:1. Also Evelyn Underhill, The Mystic Way, p. 268.

⁶² I Peter 2:9. Cf. Heb. 3:1; Titus 2:14.

"peculiar people."⁶³ Christians are frequently referred to as "the elect."⁶⁴ Finally, this idea of special destiny became so strong that the world is described as being made for the sake of the Church⁶⁵ which was created before the sun and the moon.⁶⁶

If the experience of the Spirit meant inner joy and newness of life, it also involved separation from the world. In bold contrast to the syncretistic trend of the age, Christianity preached unqualified opposition to all other faiths: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God,"⁶⁷ said James; and John echoed, "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him."⁶⁸ In his simple yet dramatic way, the author of II Clement draws a picture: "Now the world that is, the world to come are two enemies. . . . We cannot then be the friends of both; but we must bid farewell to this world, to consort with that which is to come."⁶⁹ With a hearty contempt for the

⁶³ I Clement, 64. ὁ ἐκλεξάμενος τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ ἡμᾶς δι' αὐτοῦ εἰς λαὸν περιούσιον. . . .
Cf. I Clement, 29,30; Barnabas, 3:6.

⁶⁴ ἐκλεκτοί I Clement, 58:2; 59:2; II Clement, 14:5; Hermas, Vis., II:2:5; Mart. Polyc., XXII:3.

⁶⁵ Shepherd of Hermas, Vis., I:1:6; II:4:1.

⁶⁶ II Clement, 14:1.

⁶⁷ James 4:4.

⁶⁸ I John 2:15.

⁶⁹ II Clement, 6:3,5. ἔστιν δὲ οὗτος ὁ αἰὼν καὶ ὁ μέλλων δύο ἐχθροί. . . . οὐ δύναμεθα οὖν τῶν δύο φίλοι εἶναι· δεῖ δὲ ἡμᾶς τούτῳ ἀποταξαμένους ἐκείνῳ χρᾶσθαι.
Cf. Hermas, Vis., IV:3.

pleasures of this world, the Christian regarded himself as a stranger and pilgrim far away from his real home.⁷⁰

"You know that you, as the servants of God, are living in a strange country, for your city is far from this city."⁷¹

As might be expected within a virtual pneumatocracy, the leadership of the early Church stood in direct relation to the Spirit. Insofar as there were differences of authority within the Church's rather loose organization, the offices which ranked highest were those most clearly related to the Spirit. Paul brings this out when he writes, "God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues."⁷² But at this time there was no clearly defined set of functions for each person within the brotherhood, much less a complex hierarchy. Not only the community as a whole but the leaders as well were subject to the Word of God, and in that sense they were all on an

⁷⁰ Hebrews 13:14; Phil. 3:20.

⁷¹ Hermas, Sim., I:1. Οἶδατε . . . ὅτι ἐπὶ ξένης κατοικεῖτε ὑμεῖς οἱ δοῦλοι τοῦ Θεοῦ· ἡ γὰρ πόλις ὑμῶν μακρὰν ἔστιν ἀπὸ τῆς πόλεως ταύτης.

⁷² I Cor. 12:28. Cf. Eph. 4:11; Rom. 12:6-9.

equality.⁷³ Christians were subject first to Christ through the Spirit and then secondarily to His appointed rulers: "Thou shalt love thy Maker, thou shalt fear thy Creator. . . . Thou shalt obey thy master as types of God in modesty and fear . . . for He came not to call men with respect of persons, but those whom the Spirit has prepared."⁷⁴ The outstanding success of these leaders in working miracles or winning converts was attributed not to their innate ability but entirely to the operation of the Spirit within them. Eusebius records, "For a great many wonderful miracles of the divine Spirit were at that time still being done by them [the early disciples], so that whole crowds of men at the first hearing eagerly received in their souls the religion of the Creator of the universe."⁷⁵

While in theory all Christians were on a strict

⁷³ "We have it firmly impressed upon us that the local personages and officials . . . can at that time have played only a modest part as leaders. . . . the Spirit is granted to the community as a whole and as a unity, and the officials and personages are in the position of members in this unity, and not above it." Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Barnabas, XIX:19:2,7. ἀγαπήσεις τὸν ποιήσαντά σε, φοβηθήσῃ τὸν σε πλάσαντα . . . ὑποταχήσῃ κυρίοις ὡς τύπῳ θεοῦ ἐν αἰσχύνη καὶ φόβῳ. . . ὅτι οὐκ ἦλθεν κατὰ πρόσωπον καλέσαι, ἀλλ' ἐφ' οὓς τὸ πνεῦμα ἡτοίμασεν.

⁷⁵ Eusebius, H.E., III:37:3. ἔπει καὶ τοῦ θείου πνεύματος εἰς ἔτι τότε δι' αὐτῶν πλεῖστα παράδοξοι δυνάμεις ἐνῆρχοντο, ὥστε ἀπὸ πρώτης ἀκροάσεως ἄθρόως αὐτάνδρα πλήθη προθύμως τὴν εἰς τὸν τῶν ὅλων δημιουργὸν εὐσεβείαν ἐν ταῖς αὐτῶν ψυχαῖς καταδέχεσθαι.

equality, a few soon evidenced more spiritual gifts than their brethren. By their deeds as well as by their words they could claim the same spiritual authority that Jesus had had.⁷⁶ It was natural that in a community which placed such a high premium on spiritual endowments, these gifted individuals should be accorded great respect and honour - even material advantage. In time this led to grave abuses. Charlatans claiming to be prophets or missionaries tried to take advantage of Christian hospitality and thus cast discredit on the faith.⁷⁷ Even during the first century it became necessary to devise some means of distinguishing the true from the false. Paul bitterly complains of those disturbing the peace of his newly-founded churches: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds."⁷⁸ But he does not elaborate a test except the general one, "No one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Jesus be cursed!'" and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy

⁷⁶ Cf. Lake, Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity, pp. 40f.

⁷⁷ On this vide Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, pp. 68-72.

⁷⁸ II Corinthians 11:13-15.

Spirit."⁷⁹ John is a bit more specific,⁸⁰ but it is the Didache which gives us the greatest elaboration of tests for true and false prophets.⁸¹

That these tests became increasingly necessary is evidence of the gradual deterioration of the prophetic or charismatic function. During the first few years of the Church's life, all the original leaders were charismatics; that is, they were endowed with a special charisma which came direct from God whereby they could work miracles, heal diseases and exorcise demons.⁸² Unlike the deacons and presbyters, the chief charismatics (apostles, prophets and teachers) were not chosen by the people but were merely accepted once the presence of the special charisma became evident.⁸³ Apostles and evangelists appear to have circulated freely preaching the Gospel to unbelievers and founding new churches. Of the original Twelve, tradition places John at Ephesus and Peter and Paul at Rome where they died.⁸⁴ But it is doubtful if they settled in one place long except when in captivity. The prophets, on the other hand, often settled in a

⁷⁹ I Cor. 12:3. Cf. I Thess. 5:19-22.

⁸⁰ I John 4:1-3.

⁸¹ Didache, XI. Cf. Hermas, Mand., XI:7-16.

⁸² On the important place of healing and exorcism in the early Church, vide Weinel, Die Wirkungen des Geistes und der Geister, pp. 109ff.

⁸³ Note the activity of the Spirit in electing charismatics: Acts 13:1-3. Cf. Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 191f.

⁸⁴ Eusebius, H.E., III:31 and II:25.

community and preached to the Church, saw visions, prophesied, divulged higher revelations as the Spirit made it known to them. The Didache shows with what high reverence these offices were held despite their not infrequent abuse: "Let every Apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. . . . And every prophet who speaks in the Spirit ye shall not try nor prove; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven."⁸⁵

The bishops, presbyters, and deacons were at first quite minor officials in the Church. Any man in the Church who lived a decent upright life was qualified for such a position. No special charisma was necessary as it was for the apostles, prophets, and teachers. Because of this, the deacons and bishops must not have been held in very high regard, for the author of the Didache found it necessary to order: "Therefore, despise them the bishops and deacons not, for they are those that are the honoured among you with the prophets and teachers."⁸⁶ It is worth our notice in passing that this state of affairs constituted almost a denial of apostolic succession as the term

⁸⁵ Didache, XI:4,7. Πᾶς δὲ ἀπόστολος ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ὑμᾶς δεχθήτω ὡς Κύριος. . . . καὶ πάντα προφήτην λαλοῦντα ἐν πνεύματι οὐ πειράσετε οὐδὲ διακρίνεῖτε· πάντα γὰρ ἁμαρτία ἀφεθήσεται, αὕτη δὲ ἡ ἁμαρτία οὐκ ἀφεθήσεται.

⁸⁶ Ibid., XV:2. Μὴ οὖν ὑπερίδῃτε αὐτούς· αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσὶν οἱ τετιμημένοι ὑμῶν μετὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ διδασκάλων.
cf. the different tone used by Clement (I Clement, 42:4):
καθίστανον τὰς ἀρχαὶς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάσαντες τῷ πνεύματι, εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεύειν.

is used in the Roman and Anglican communions.⁸⁷ Indeed, it was more like a revolt against such an idea. The Jewish religion believed heartily in "apostolic succession" and guarded it carefully by insisting on absolute purity in the blood-line of the priesthood. Against this artificial "principle of the historical continuity of the Church" the early Ecclesia substituted a continuing succession of spiritual charismatics dependent not on blood lines nor external formulae but on the immediate activity of the Spirit. That this principle was gradually abandoned in favour of the old Jewish idea proves less that the early Christians were wrong than that the spiritual vitality of the Church became diminished with the passage of time.

So significant were the charismatic offices for the subsequent development of the Church, it would be well at this point to examine the Spirit's activity with reference to them more in detail. As has already been noted, though the Church borrowed a great deal from its Jewish background it differed quite fundamentally in many respects. The Apostles must have felt at times as though they were adrift on a chartless sea as one after another the Temple worship, the subservience to the Law, and the hierarchical authority of the priesthood were abandoned. A new type of Church government and a fresh system of theology had to be forged. Therefore, the most

⁸⁷ For this point I am indebted to T.M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Church, p. 19.

important function of the Spirit to these early Church leaders was as a guide and a revealer of divine wisdom. As Clement makes abundantly clear, they still accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as the Word of God. "Let us do that which is written, for the Holy Spirit says. . . ."88 and again "You have looked closely into the Scriptures, which are true, and were given by the Holy Spirit."89 But these Scriptures could no longer be interpreted in the manner of the orthodox rabbis. A new exegesis was necessary. Further, it became evident that the Old Testament needed certain supplementation on many points. And here the Spirit proved invaluable as interpreter and teacher. The apostles "went forth in the assurance of the Holy Spirit preaching the good news that the Kingdom of God was coming."90 Justin amplified this view in his Exhortation to the Greeks: "They have taught us nothing from their own private fancy . . . but without wrangling and contention received from God the knowledge which also they taught to us."91

88 I Clement, 13:1. ποιήσωμεν τὸ γεγραμμένον, λέγει χάρις τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. . . .

Cf. also 8:1; 16:2; 22:1; 47:3.

89 Ibid., 45:2. ἐνκεκύφατε εἰς τὰς ἱερὰς γραφάς, τὰς ἀληθείας, τὰς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου.

90 Ibid., 42:3. μετὰ πληροφίας πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐξηλθόντες εὐαγγελιζόμενοι, τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ μέλλειν ἔρχεσθαι.

91 Justin Martyr, Coh. ad Graec., 8. Μηδὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας αὐτῶν φαντασίας διδάξαντες ἡμᾶς. . . ἀλλ' ἀφιλονείκως καὶ ἀστασιάστως τὴν παρὰ θεοῦ δεξαμένου γνώσιν καὶ ταύτην διδάσκοντες ἡμᾶς.

Cf. Justin, Dial. c. Trypho., 4,7; Hermas, Sim., IX:25:2; Mand., III:1f.

Schweitzer was still under the influence of the Tübingen school when he claimed that Paul disregarded entirely the teaching of Jesus, but he is quite right in pointing out that "It is on the basis of revelations which came to him from the Spirit that Paul gives his decisions upon questions of belief and conduct."⁹² Pauline eschatology, for instance, is based almost entirely on these special revelations.⁹³ The Apostle is very careful to distinguish between the teaching of the Spirit and his own personal opinion,⁹⁴ which shows that to him the distinction was a very real one. Paul placed an exceedingly high value on this understanding of the Spirit, for without it the Gospel was "folly" and the Word of God a "hidden wisdom."⁹⁵ Clement in writing to the Church at Corinth claims much the same Spirit of inspiration as Paul: "For you will give us joy and gladness, if you are obedient to the things which we have written through the Holy Spirit."⁹⁶

From our records it would appear that it was quite customary for πνευματικοί to receive special revelations while in a form of trance. Both Paul⁹⁷ and John⁹⁸ and even

⁹² Schweitzer, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, p. 172.

⁹³ Vide I Cor. 15:51f.; I Thess. 4:13-18.

⁹⁴ I Corinthians 7:25.

⁹⁵ cf. I Cor. 1:18; 2:8, 10-14.

⁹⁶ I Clement, 63:2. χαρὰν γὰρ καὶ ἀγαλλίασιν ἡμῖν παρέξετε, ἐὰν ὑπήκοοι γενόμενοι τοῖς ὑφ' ἡμῶν γεγραμμένοις διὰ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Cf. also 59:1.

⁹⁷ II Corinthians 12:2-4.

⁹⁸ Rev. 1:10.

Peter⁹⁹ describe communications they received from the Spirit when they were in an unconscious or semi-conscious state. So common did this type of revelation become that later apologists took it for granted that all prophetic utterance was accompanied by a state of trance:

You cannot be ignorant of the writings of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets, who, lifted in ecstasy above the natural operations of their minds by the impulses of the Divine Spirit, uttered the things with which they were inspired, the Spirit making use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute.¹⁰⁰

And in another place the same writer refers to "the Spirit of God, who moved the mouths of the prophets like musical instruments."¹⁰¹ Justin Martyr has several important passages which exhibit the same view exactly:

The holy men . . . had no need of the art of words . . . but to present themselves pure to the energy of the Divine Spirit, in order that the divine plectrum itself, descending from the heavens, and using righteous men as an instrument like a harp or lyre, might reveal to us the knowledge of

⁹⁹ Acts 10:9-16.

¹⁰⁰ Athenagoras, Legatio pro Christianis, IX. οὐκ ἀνοήτους γεγονέναι οὔτε τῶν Μωϋσέως, οὔτε τῶν Ἡσαΐου καὶ Ἰερεμίου, καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν προφητῶν, οἱ κατ' ἔκστασιν τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς λογισμῶν, κινήσαντος αὐτοὺς τοῦ ὁσίου πνεύματος, ἃ ἐνηργούντο ἐξεφώνησαν συγκαρρησμένου τοῦ πνεύματος, ὥστε καὶ αὐλεῖται ἀόχλῳ ἐμπνεύσει.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., VII. θεοῦ πνεύματι ὡς ὄργανα κεκινηκότι τὰ τῶν προφητῶν στόματα.

The astonishing thing about this is that it was written by a thoroughly orthodox writer circa. 176 A.D. when Montanist tenets were fully known!

things divine and heavenly."¹⁰²

And identical treatments are found in such diverse writers as Theophilus,¹⁰³ Clement of Alexandria,¹⁰⁴ Barnabas,¹⁰⁵ and Macarius.¹⁰⁶

Though Paul seems to have considered the gift of "discerning the Spirit" as of greatest value in the Church, there was a definite tendency for other more spectacular charismata to capture the popular fancy. Especially was this true of the young church at Corinth where the turbulence of glossolalia and ecstasies threatened to get out of control. Ever since the experience of Pentecost, Spirit seizures and high emotional exaltation not only occurred but were expected and looked for in the Church. They constituted, in fact, one of the

¹⁰² Justin Martyr, Coh. ad Graec., 8. τοὺς ἁγίους ἄνδρας . . . οἷς οὐ λόγον ἔδεδῆκε τέχνης . . . ἀλλὰ κιθάρους ἑαυτοὺς τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεύματος παρασχέιν ἐνεργείᾳ, ἵν' αὐτὸ τὸ θεῖον ἐξ οὐρανοῦ κατιὸν πλήκτρον, ὥσπερ ὄργανῳ κιθάρας τινὸς ἢ λύρας τοῖς δικαίοις ἀνδράσι χρωμένοι, τὴν τῶν θείων ἡμῶν καὶ οὐρανίων ἀποκαλύψῃ χινῶσιν.

Cf. his reference to ἐκστάσει in Dial. c. Trypho., 115. Vide also Ibid., 7.

¹⁰³ Theophilus, Ad Autolycus, I:14; II:9,22; III:12.

¹⁰⁴ Clem. Alex., Strom., VI:18.

¹⁰⁵ Barnabas, IX:7; X:2; XII:2; XIII:5.

¹⁰⁶ Macarius, Homilia, XLVII:14.

surest proofs of the Spirit's presence.¹⁰⁷ But Paul, for all his ebullient nature and fiery temperament, was at heart a lover of decency and order.¹⁰⁸ From his boyhood in Tarsus he knew enough of the ecstatic elements in the popular mystery religions to know that they often led to mad orgies and physical excess. In comparison, the quiet and reverent worship of the Jewish synagogue created a very favourable contrast. But at the same time Paul was certain that the true activity of the Spirit should not be hampered by undue adherence to any form. He saw the value of conserving religious enthusiasm and channeling it into constructive endeavour. Hence, he cautions the Corinthian church to emphasize and encourage such gifts as lead to edification, such as prophetic revelation or interpretation of the Scriptures. He concludes by saying, "Earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and

¹⁰⁷ In this connection note the curious account of the Christians at Ephesus who had never heard of the Holy Spirit: Acts 19:1-6. Cf. further, A.L. Humphries, The Holy Spirit in Faith and Experience, chap. VII, and Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 163f. As might be expected, Lake traces the origin of these prophetic seizures to the mystery religions, though how simple Galilean fishermen came to be devotees of the cults far from Palestine is not explained. BC, vol. I, pp. 325f. A much more plausible explanation is that these phenomena arose naturally because of the tremendous emotional and physical experience the disciples had just had. That such states are quite contagious is proved by the history of any great religious revival.

¹⁰⁸ "Speaking with tongues and prophecies were only tolerable if they were isolated incidents in a generally orderly procedure." W.F.Knox, St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles, p. 121. Cf. Weinel, Die Wirkungen des Geistes und der Geister, pp. 72ff.

in order."¹⁰⁹

Though James and Paul did most to emphasize the moral and ethical activities of the Spirit as against the miraculous physical phenomena, even Luke did not forget the place of the former in a well-balanced Christian life. Luke, of course, was inclined to emphasize the more spectacular elements of the new life in the Spirit: glossolalia and divine healings. But he also acknowledged that courageous speaking of the Word,¹¹⁰ wisdom,¹¹¹ faith,¹¹² and simple goodness¹¹³ give evidence of the Spirit's presence. The most significant fact, however, is that both these diverse types of charismata were present together in the early Church. Though some friction arose at times, for the most part they coexisted amicably and immeasurably enriched the Christian work and worship. Justin bears witness to this in his Dialogue with Trypho:

Daily some [of you] are becoming disciples in the name of Christ. . . .
For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel,

¹⁰⁹ I Cor. 14:39f. Cf. the entire preceding passage and I Thess. 5:19f. On the conflict over "spiritual" excesses in the Corinthian church cf. Büchsel, Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament, pp. 367ff.

¹¹⁰ Acts 4:31.

¹¹¹ Acts 6:3.

¹¹² Acts 6:5; 11:24.

¹¹³ Acts 11:24. Cf. Gore, The Holy Spirit and the Church, p. 112; and Büchsel, Der Geist Gottes im Neuen Testament, pp. 240ff.

another of strength, another of healing, another of fore-knowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God.¹¹⁴

Even Irenaeus, in an age that had begun to repudiate "abnormal" spiritual manifestations, could still write as follows:

In the same way we hear of many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God, whom also the apostle terms "spiritual", they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their flesh has been stripped off and taken away, and they have become purely spiritual.¹¹⁵

Indeed, it was not until the Montanist prophets claimed exclusive possession of the Spirit that the Church began to play down and even repudiate glossolalia and prophetic

¹¹⁴ Justin Martyr, Dial. c. Trypho., 39. καὶ ἡμέραν τινὰς μαθητευομένους εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ. . . . Ὁ μὲν γὰρ λαμβάνει συνέσεως πνεῦμα, ὃ δὲ βουλῆς, ὃ δὲ ἰσχύος, ὃ δὲ ἰάσεως, ὃ δὲ προγνώσεως, ὃ δὲ διδασκαλίας, ὃ δὲ φόβου Θεοῦ.

¹¹⁵ "Quemadmodum et multos audivimus fratres in Ecclesia, prophetica habentes charismata, et per Spiritum universis linguis loquentis, et absconsa hominum in manifestum producentes ad utilitatem, et mysteria Dei enarrantes, quos et spirituales Apostolus vocat: secundum participationem Spiritus existentes spirituales, sed non secundum defraudationem et interceptionem carnis, et nude hoc ipsum solum." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., V:6:1. For a parallel passage cf. Origen, Contra Celsum, I:46.

utterance.

Toward the end of the first century and in the beginning of the second, emotional outbursts in the Church deteriorated in quality and consequently began to fade from popular esteem. When Celsus described the performance of some of the itinerant prophets thus:

These are accustomed to say each for himself, "I am God; I am the Son of God; or I am the Divine Spirit; I have come because the world is perishing. . . . Blessed is he who now does me homage." . . . To these promises are added strange, fanatical, and quite unintelligible words, of which no rational person can find the meaning: for so dark are they, as to have no meaning at all; but they give occasion to every fool or impostor to apply them to suit his own purpose.¹¹⁶

he was probably not exaggerating. What Lietzmann calls "the classical period of Christian prophecy"¹¹⁷ was on the wane, and in its place came an emphasis on the activity of the Spirit as a moral force. Hermas gave expression to this trend when he wrote: "For if you defile

¹¹⁶ Origen, Contra Celsus, VII:9. Πρόχειρον δ' ἐκάστῳ καὶ σύνηδες εἰπεῖν. Ἐγὼ ὁ θεὸς εἰμι, ἢ θεοῦ παῖς, ἢ Πνεῦμα θεῶν. Ἦκω δὲ ἤδη γὰρ ὁ κόσμος ἀπόλλυται, . . . Μακάριος ὁ νῦν με θρησκεύσας. . . . Ταῦτ' ἐπανατείναντες προστιθέασιν ἐξ ἐξῆς ἀνύστα, καὶ πάροις τ' αὖ, καὶ πάντα ἄδηλα, ὧν τὸ μὲν γνώρισμα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἔχων νοῦν εὐρεῖν δύναιτο. ἀσαφὴ γὰρ καὶ τὸ μᾶλλον ἀνοήτῳ δὲ ἢ χοῦτι παντὶ περὶ πάντος ἀφορμὴν ἐνδίδωσιν ὅπῃ βούλεται τὸ λεχθὲν σφ' ἐτερίζεσθαι.

¹¹⁷ Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, p. 70. Cf. also The Beginnings of the Christian Church, pp. 164f.

your flesh you defile also the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁸ And again, "For if you are courageous the Holy Spirit which dwells in you will be pure, not obscured by another evil spirit. . . . But if any ill temper enter, at once the Holy Spirit, which is delicate, is oppressed."¹¹⁹ Moral regeneration became not merely one aspect of Christianity but its very aim and purpose on earth. As Harnack has described it, the Christian mission became in effect a "moral enterprise"¹²⁰ which proposed to change not only individual lives but the state of society as a whole. In a world of spiritual bankruptcy and moral degradation, this religion of purity and wholesomeness beckoned thousands from all social strata, and ultimately it was the moral rather than the ecstatic activities of the Spirit which became normative for the whole Church.

With this shift in emphasis on the activity of the Spirit there came a corresponding change in belief concerning the manner in which the Spirit was conferred. It would appear that in the earliest period the Spirit was conferred upon believers either direct from God or

¹¹⁸ *Hermas, Sim.*, V:7:2. ἔὰν μιάνῃς τὴν σὰρκα σου, μιανεῖς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

¹¹⁹ *Hermas, Mand.*, V:1:2,3. ἔὰν γὰρ μακρόθυμος ᾖς, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ κατοικοῦν, ἐν σοὶ καθάρων ἔσται, μὴ ἐπισκοτούμενον ὑπὸ ἑτέρου πονηροῦ πνεύματος. . . . ἔὰν δὲ ὀξύχολία τις προσέλθῃ, εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, τρυφερόν ὄν, στενοχωρεῖται.

¹²⁰ Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, vol. I, pp. 205f. As an example of Christianity's power of moral suasion, Harnack points to Cyprian's treatise "Ad Donatum", *vide* p. 211.

as the result of the laying on of apostolic hands. Not until this happened could the believer be considered a Christian. The presence of the Spirit constituted proof of his acceptance by God - a visible assurance of his election. This in turn was followed by baptism which completed his "calling" as a Christian. Such seems to have been the order at Pentecost¹²¹ and at the conversion of Cornelius.¹²² Though Paul closely links baptism and the Spirit, it was the latter which seemed the more important; indeed, it was the latter which assured the efficacy of the former: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body."¹²³ And again, "You were washed, you were consecrated, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."¹²⁴

Almost simultaneous with this practice there comes another, reversing the order. As soon as conversion occurs, the convert is baptized in the lively hope that

¹²¹ Acts 2:2-4. In Peter's sermon, however, he mentions baptism before conferment of the Spirit (2:38). Nothing is said about whether the three thousand converts received the Spirit or not (2:41), but it is highly probable that they did from the description of what the subsequent life of the Church was like (2:42-47).

¹²² Acts 10:44-48.

¹²³ I Corinthians 12:13.

¹²⁴ I Cor. 6:11. Cf. Rom. 5:5; 8:9; II Cor. 1:21f.; Gal. 3:2; 4:6. In I Cor. 14:23 Weiss contends that ¹⁸οἱ ἄβπτιστοι were the unbaptized laymen in the Church - unbaptized because they had not yet exhibited signs of the Spirit. Though such an interpretation is possible, it is difficult to avoid feeling that the exegesis is a bit far-fetched. The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. II, pp. 624f. Cf. Expositor's Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 910; and Alford's Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 597.

the coming of the Spirit would follow immediately. This is what may have happened with the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost. But at times baptism does not prove sufficient, as the occurrence at Samaria illustrated.¹²⁵ Even though Philip had made many converts and had baptized them, the Spirit had not come down. It was necessary for Peter and John to lay their hands on the heads of the newly won believers for the Holy Ghost to descend.

Only when the initial enthusiasm of the Church began to ebb did both of these views give way to a third: namely, that baptism was identified with the descent of the Spirit. No "signs" of the Spirit were looked for other than an upright life, moral discrimination, and participation in the fellowship of the Church. It was only through baptism that the Spirit could be conferred, and baptism could be administered only by those within the Church. Hence, it was an easy corollary to state that no salvation could be found outside the fellowship of the Body of Christ.¹²⁶

This change in view, however did not occur simultaneously throughout the whole Church. On the contrary, we have reason to believe from the divergence in opinion expressed by the Didache, Clement of Rome, and Ignatius that there existed a wide variety both of organization and practice within the second century Church. For the

¹²⁵ Acts 8:14-17. Cf. also Acts 19:1-7.

¹²⁶ Cf. Gore, The Holy Spirit in the Church, pp. 14f.

most part this did not prejudice amicable relations between the various local churches. They admitted that the Spirit could lead other groups of Christians into ways differing from their own, and though each church doubtless felt its local customs were best, it maintained more or less close intercourse with its neighbours. This resilient attitude of tolerance can be explained partly by the universal passion for unity which Church leaders everywhere sought to foster. The Martyrdom of Polycarp illustrates this ecumenical attitude in its salutation: "The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the Church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the sojournings of the holy and catholic Church in every place."¹²⁷ The aged Polycarp himself, when in his house, is represented as "engaged in nothing else night and day than praying for all men, and for the churches throughout the world."¹²⁸ Even at the time he was apprehended, he prayed for "the whole Catholic Church throughout the world."¹²⁹ Clement of Rome somewhat mitigated the severity of his rebuke

¹²⁷ Mart. Polyc., prol. Ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ παροικοῦσα Ἰμύρνῳ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ παροικούσῃ ἐν Φιλομηλίῳ καὶ πάσαις ταῖς κατὰ πάντα τόπον τῆς ἀχίας καὶ καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας παροικίαις.

Cf. R.H. Charles, Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments, pp. 167ff.

¹²⁸ Mart. Polyc., V:1. νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν οὐδὲν ἕτερον ποιῶν ἢ προσευχόμενος περὶ πάντων καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐκκλησιῶν.

¹²⁹ Ibid., VIII:1. πάσης τῆς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας.

by reminding the Corinthian church that they were engaged in a common warfare: "These things, beloved, we write to you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but also to remind ourselves. For we are struggling in the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us."¹³⁰

With the keen desire for unity, the Church came more and more to be regarded as a supernatural fellowship having only a transient connection with this age:

Wherefore, brethren, if we do the will of our Father God we shall belong to the first Church, the spiritual one which was created before the sun and the moon. . . . And moreover the books and the Apostles declare that the Church belongs not to the present, but has existed from the beginning; for she was spiritual, as was also our Jesus.¹³¹

It is quite understandable, then, why heretics and schismatics were regarded with such bitter hatred. Irenaeus is representative when he pours out the vials of his wrath upon them thus:

A spiritual disciple of this sort truly receiving the Spirit of God . . . does indeed judge all men,

¹³⁰ I Clement, 7:1. ταῦτα, ἀγαπητοί, οὐ μόνον ὑμῶν νοουῦντες ἐπιστέλλομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἑαυτοὺς ὑπομνήσκοντες· ἐν γὰρ τῷ αὐτῷ ἔργῳ σκῆματι, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ἡμῶν ἀγὼν ἐπίκειται.

¹³¹ II Clement, 14. Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί, ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν θεοῦ, ἐσόμεθα ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς πρώτης, τῆς πνευματικῆς, τῆς πρὸ ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης ἐκτισμένης. . . . καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον καὶ οἱ ἀποστολῶν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν οὐ νῦν εἶναι λέγουσιν ἀλλὰ ἀνωθεν. ἦν γὰρ πνευματικὴ, ὡς καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἡμῶν.

but is himself judged by no man
[I Cor. 2:15] He shall also
judge those who give rise to
schisms, who are destitute of the
love of God, and who look to
their own special advantage rather
than to the unity of the
Church; and who for trifling reasons,
or any kind of reason which occurs
to them, cut in pieces and divide
the great and glorious Body of Christ.¹³²

Each congregation of the Church had almost complete autonomy. Like the Jewish synagogue after which it was fashioned, the local church was a self-sufficient unit complete in itself. At the same time, however, it was a manifestation of "the collective Church of God,"¹³³ and it had to demean itself as such. Under these circumstances it is easy to see why the differences which characterized the various congregations were tolerated, but what constitutes a greater difficulty is why the Church was generally considered to be a unity at all.

The answer given by the Church Fathers shows they associated unity with the Spirit. Outer differences were rendered unimportant by the inner manifestations of the

¹³² "Tal is discipulus vere spiritalis recipiens Spiritum Dei judicatus quidem omnes, ipse autem a nemine judicatur. . . . Judicabit autem et eos, qui schismata operantur, qui sunt inanes, non habentes Dei dilectionem, suamque utilitatem potius considerantes quam unitatem Ecclesiae: et propter modicas et quaslibet causas magnum et gloriosum corpus Christi conscindunt et dividunt." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:33:1,7.

¹³³ Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 431f. Cf. Acts 15; 20:17,28; I Clement, 63. Also Harnack, The Constitution and Law of the Church, p. 49; J. Weiss, The History of Primitive Christianity, vol. II, pp. 621ff.

Spirit. It was the Spirit, indeed, which united the Church.

As Irenaeus graphically represented it:

Wherefore also the Lord promised to send the Comforter [John 16:7], who should join us to God. For as a compacted lump of dough cannot be formed of dry wheat without fluid matter, nor can a loaf possess unity, so, in like manner, neither could we, being many, be made one in Christ Jesus without the water from heaven. And as dry earth does not bring forth unless it receives moisture, in like manner we also, being originally a dry tree, could never have brought forth fruit unto life without the voluntary rain from above. For our bodies have received unity among themselves by means of that laver which leads to incorruption; but our souls, by means of the Spirit.¹³⁴

Even Tatian, whose theological teaching was so abstract it tended to wander off on heretical tangents, saw the practical importance of the Spirit in the Church: "And further, it behoves us now to seek for what we once had, but have lost, to unite the soul with the Holy Spirit, and to strive after union with God."¹³⁵ Though their language is the typical Greek philosophy of Egypt, both

¹³⁴ "Unde et Dominus pollicitus est mittere se Paracletum, qui nos aptaret Deo. Sicut enim de arideo tritico massa una fieri non potest sine humore, neque unus panis: ita nec nos multi unum fieri in Christo Jesu poteramus, sine aqua quae de coelo est. Et sicut arida terra, si non percipiat humorem, non fructificat; sic et nos, lignum aridem existentes primum nunquam fructificar-
emus vitam, sine superna voluntaria pluvia. Corpora enim nostra per lavacrum illam, quae est ad incorruptionem, unitatem acceperunt; animae autem per Spiritum." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:17:2.

¹³⁵ Tatian, Oratio adversus Graecos, xv. Καὶ χρὴ λοιπὸν ἡμᾶς ὅπερ ἔχοντες ἀπολωλέκαμεν, τοῦτο νῦν

Origen¹³⁶ and Clement of Alexandria¹³⁷ express much the same idea. It remained only for Irenaeus to put into words the culmination of this line of thought: "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace."¹³⁸

How long this tolerant unity of the Spirit would have continued had no other force intervened to disrupt it, would be difficult to say. No human institution can remain static for long, so it is probable that the Church would have changed of itself in due process of time. In fact, as has already been noted, this change was well under way in many localities. Particularly in Asia Minor the episcopal organization tightened, and congregations

135(cont.) ἀναζητεῖν, ζευχύνει τε τὴν ψυχὴν τῷ Πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ, καὶ τὴν κατὰ θεὸν συζυγίαν πραγματεύεσθαι.

As H.B. Swete has pointed out, (The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church, pp. 39ff.) neither Tatian, Athenagoras, nor Theophilus have much to say on the Spirit that is relevant. They all treated the Spirit in an intellectual and theological fashion, whereas the unity of the Church depended not so much upon abstract theorizing as upon practical experience.

136 Origen, Contra Celsus, I:2.

137 Clem. Alex., Strom., V:4. Πνευματικὸν γὰρ καὶ γνωστικὸν οἶδε τὸν τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος μαθητὴν, τὸν ἐκ θεοῦ χορηγούμενον, ὅ ἐστι νοῦς Χριστοῦ.

Evelyn Underhill in The Mystic Way, pp. 280ff. has some interesting conclusions on Clement's use of the word "gnostic" in this connection.

138 "Ubi enim Ecclesiam, ibi et Spiritus Dei; et ubi Spiritus Dei, illic Ecclesia, et omnis gratia." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:24:1. Cf. also III:11:8 and 17:2.

over a considerable area were bound under the control of a centralized ecclesiastical government. Ignatius can combine the claim to prophetic inspiration with an intense regard for the organized ministry. He cries out, "I had no knowledge of this from any human being, but the Spirit was preaching and saying this: 'Do nothing without the bishop . . . love unity.'"¹³⁹ Whereas the bishops and deacons were purely administrative functions in the primitive Church, subservient to the Apostles and prophets, by the time of Clement of Rome the bishops were compared to the Old Testament priesthood¹⁴⁰ and respect for their authority was enjoined upon the Church.¹⁴¹ As the pneumatics declined, the bishops took control of public worship and eventually took over the entire Church leadership.

The even tenor of this change, however, was sharply accelerated by the emergence in Asia Minor of a movement variously known as Montanism, or the Phrygian heresy, or the New Prophecy.¹⁴² Our knowledge of this

¹³⁹ Ignatius, Philad., VII. ἀπὸ σαρκὸς ἀνθρωπίνης οὐκ ἔχων. τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐκήρυσσεν λέχον τάδε· Χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου μηδὲν ποιεῖτε . . . τὴν ἑνῶσιν ἀγαπάτε. Cf. also Philad., praef.: τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνοις ἀποδεδειγμένοις ἐν γνώμῃ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὓς κατὰ τὸ ἴδιον θέλημα ἐστήριξεν ἐν βεβαιωσύνῃ τῷ ἁγίῳ αὐτοῦ πνεύματι.

¹⁴⁰ I Clement, 42, 40, 4. Cf. Hans Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, p. 73.

¹⁴¹ Didache, XV:1f.

¹⁴² The history of Montanism raises problems which are far too complex for adequate treatment within the

sect is dependent on a very few sayings preserved by Epiphanius and some highly prejudiced descriptions by antagonistic writers as quoted by Eusebius. Other fragments are preserved in the works of Didymus of Alexandria, Hippolytus, and Philaster. Though Tertullian was a Montanist and had much to say about the movement, there is reason to believe that a great difference existed between what he taught and what the Phrygian ecstasies held to be true.

About the middle of the second century (the date is still in much dispute) there appeared at Ardabau in Mysia on the Phrygian border¹⁴³ a self-advertised prophet named Montanus. He may have been a priest of Cybele,¹⁴⁴

142(cont.) narrow confines of this dissertation. Good introductions to the subject can be found by Nathanael Bonwetsch, "Montanismus", Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 3rd ed., vol. 13, pp. 417-426; or by Adolf Harnack, "Montanism", EB, 11th ed., vol. 18, pp. 757-760; or George Salmon, "Montanus", A Dictionary of Christian Biography, (edit. Smith and Wace), vol. III, pp. 935-945. Though it is old, the best standard history of the movement is still Bonwetsch's Die Geschichte des Montanismus. For a lengthy discussion on the historical merits of the sources on Montanism, vide Labriolle, Les Sources de l'Histoire du Montanisme, pp. xvi ff.

143 On the site and remains of Ardabau and Pepouza, vide W.M. Ramsay, Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia, vol. I, part II, pp. 573ff.

144 From the epithets applied to him by Jerome, Ep. ad Marcellam, I:186. Cf. also Didymus, De trinitate, III:41. Wilhelm Schepelern (Der Montanismus und die Phrygischen Kulte, pp. 122ff. et passim), tries to show that Montanism grew out of Phrygian mystery cult practices. Though he has adduced quite a bit of evidence from inscriptions, the results are inconclusive.

but following his conversion to Christianity he claimed to have received a prophetic call similar to that of Agabus, Judas, Silas or other prophets of the early Church. He attracted a numerous following including two women, Prisca and Maximilla, who shared with him his prophetic gift. At first only these three appear to have experienced the ecstatic trances which became characteristic of the sect. It was not until after their death that all kinds of minor prophets sprang up. Maximilla, indeed, seemed to think she would be the last of the prophets. "After me," she said, "no prophet will come but only the final end."¹⁴⁵

Montanus claimed to be the Paraclete promised by Christ in John 14-16. It is probable that he did not mean his person was to be identified with the Holy Spirit; rather, it is more reasonable to suppose that he felt himself to be possessed by the Spirit while in the state of trance. Thus his prophetic utterances would be equivalent to direct statements of the Spirit. There is little doubt that the "prophecies" were uttered when the prophet was in a semi-conscious or even an unconscious state. Montanus has described the experience, "Behold, man is like a lyre, and I [the Spirit] strike the plectron. Man sleeps and I wake. Lo, it is the Lord who takes away

¹⁴⁵ Epiphanius, Panarion haereses, XLVIII:2:4.
μετ' ἐμὲ προφήτης οὐκέτι ἔσται, ἀλλὰ συντέλεια.

men's heart and gives them another."¹⁴⁶ And Maximilla felt she was forced to bear witness to the wisdom of God whether she were willing or no.¹⁴⁷ In view of this fact it is easier to understand such extravagant statements as, "I am the Lord God Almighty, transformed into a man."¹⁴⁸ or "No angel and no messenger is here, but I the Lord, God the Father, have come."¹⁴⁹ No wonder Maximilla felt that personal attacks upon her for her prophecies were unjustified. "I am driven away like a wolf from the sheep," she complained. "I am no wolf; I am Word and Spirit and Power."¹⁵⁰

Not only did Montanus claim for himself the role of Paraclete, but he averred that his prophecies took precedence over any previous divine revelation. There is no evidence that his theology was heretical. In fact his

¹⁴⁶ Apud Epiphanius, Panarion, XLVIII:4:1. ἰδοὺ, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὡσεὶ λύρα, καὶ ὡς ἐφίπταμαι ὡσεὶ πλήκτρον. ὁ ἄνθρωπος κοιμάται. καὶ ὡς χρηχοῦμαι. ἰδοὺ, κύριός ἐστιν ὁ ἐξιστάνων καρδίας ἀνθρώπων καὶ δίδους καρδίαν ἀνθρώποις.
Regarding this Weinel says, "Dem Menschen ist es in diesem Zustand, als ob er schlafe, oder: als ob sein Herz, der Sitz des Bewusstseins nach antiker Vorstellung, ihm aus der Brust genommen sei und eine fremde Macht ihm ein anderes eingesetzt habe, so lange sie aus ihm spricht." Die Wirkungen des Geistes und der Geister, p. 92.

¹⁴⁷ Epiphanius, Panarion, XLVIII:13:1. θέλοντα καὶ μὴ θέλοντα, μαθεῖν γινώσιν θεοῦ.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., XLVIII:11:1 ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ καταχινόμενος ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 11:9. οὔτε ἄγγελος οὔτε πρέσβυς, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς πατὴρ ἦλθον.

¹⁵⁰ Apud Eusebius, H.E., V:16:17. διώκομαι ὡς λύκος ἐκ προβάτων· οὐκ εἰμὶ λύκος· ῥῆμά εἰμι καὶ πνεῦμα καὶ δύναμις.

"revelations" had very little to do with theology. Roughly, there were three subjects on which Montanus had a prophetic word to speak. First, he predicted the imminent end of the world preceded by wars and rebellions.¹⁵¹ Christ was expected to come down and set up His Kingdom which would continue a thousand years. Secondly, Montanus revealed that the "New Jerusalem" which would come down out of the heavens would be established at the little Phrygian village of Pepuza. Here Prisca declared that Christ had appeared to her as a shining female figure in a dream when she was asleep. He had caused wisdom to sink into her heart and had revealed that this was a holy place, and here Jerusalem would descend out of heaven.¹⁵² In anticipation of this blessed occurrence, Montanus prophesied thirdly that marriage should no longer be contracted by Christians and ritual fasting should be made more rigorous and employed more frequently.¹⁵³

This combination of ecstatic prophetism and asceticism appealed greatly to many Asiatic Christians, for the movement grew with amazing rapidity. Montanus proved a:

¹⁵¹ Eusebius, H.E., V:16:18 and Hippolytus, In Daniel, IV:18f. Cf. Matt. 27:7ff.; Rev. 6:2-8.

¹⁵² Epiphanius, Panarion, XLIX:1:3. ἐν ἰδέᾳ, φησὶ, γυναικὸς ἐσχηματισμένος ἐν στολῇ λαμπρᾷ ἦλθε πρὸς με Χριστός, καὶ ἐνέβαλεν ἐν ἐμοὶ τὴν σοφίαν, καὶ ἀπεκάλυψέ μοι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον εἶναι ἔχιον, καὶ ὦδε τὴν Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατιέναι.

Cf. XLVIII:14:1 and Eusebius, H.E., V:18:2.

¹⁵³ Eusebius, H.E., V:18:2f.; Hippolytus, In Daniel, IV:18f. and Elenchus, VIII:19:2; Acts of Paul and other apocryphal acts of the Apostles.

good organizer as well as a prophet. Soon Montanist churches blossomed all over Asia Minor and spread all the way to Rome. The organization of these communities was the same as in orthodox churches, but there was a different gradation of authority. Jerome reports:

With us the bishops occupy the place of apostles, but with them a bishop ranks not first but third. For while they put first the patriarchs of Pepusa in Phrygia, and place next those whom they call companions, the bishops are relegated to the third or almost the lowest rank.¹⁵⁴

It is probable that this development did not come until fairly late, but its purpose is plainly to reinstate the authority of the Spirit in the Church as it is found in apostolic Christianity.

Like most reformers, Montanus never planned to found a new sect. To him the orthodox Church had become decadent and moribund. He compared the activity of the Spirit in the primitive Church with the secularized Church of his day, and he found the latter terribly wanting. His movement, therefore, began as a call to reform, both in organization and practice. It must be said, in justice, that there was good cause for such an effort. The Church had become morally inferior; the spiritual spontaneity of the early days had been replaced by a

¹⁵⁴ "Apud nos apostolorum locum episcopi tenent; apud eos episcopus tertius est; habent enim primos de Pepusa Phrygiae patriarchas, secundos, quos appellant κοινωνοίς, atque ita in tertium, id est paene ultimum gradum episcopi devoluntur." Jerome, Ep. XLI:3.

general abhorrence of change. "Apostles and prophets raised up by God," remarks one historian, "had given place to bishops and elders appointed by men; and the laity were putting off the royal dignity of the universal priesthood on officials."¹⁵⁵ Christian piety had become lax, and superstitious elements were already incorporated into the worship service. Montanus was quite right in thinking that the chief corrective necessary was a new outpouring of the Spirit, but he was wrong in thinking that it could be obtained and kept by mechanical means - enforced asceticism and induced ecstasies.¹⁵⁶

Superficially, the "New Prophecy" appears to have been quite innocuous, perhaps even beneficial. Most of the prophetic logia now appear more absurd than heretical. But the teaching of Montanus held a grave threat to the faith. The Church firmly believed that God's revelation to man received its full and final consummation in Jesus Christ. Any new truth can only be a discovery of what has been in Christ from the first. Montanus, on the other hand, maintained that the Spirit could add to the Gospel, not only expanding what Christ taught but even contradicting it. Women as well as men were vehicles of this inspiration, and in course of time the ecstatic trances

¹⁵⁵ H.M. Gwatkin, Early Church History to A.D. 313, vol. II, p. 80. His entire chapter is an acute analysis of Montanist weaknesses as well as the positive contribution it made to the life of the Church.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. T.R. Glover, The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire, pp. 344f.

by which the prophecies came were sought as a regular part of the worship service. This is mysticism run riot; it could lead only to anarchy. The wonder is that in Phrygia it did not result in any greater license than it did.

The reaction of the Church to this new teaching was sharp and immediate. The bishops naturally resented some of the harsh things spoken about them. But even more, they were indignant at the claim that the Holy Spirit was to be found only in the ravings of the Phrygian ecstasies. Philaster, writing much later, expressed the general feeling when he said of the Montanists: "They hold that the full gift of the Holy Spirit was not granted by Christ to His Apostles [and through them to the bishops by apostolic succession!], but to their false prophets, and thus separate themselves from the Catholic Church."¹⁵⁷ With exceptional unanimity of purpose, the Asian bishops set about to discredit the new cult. They had to admit at the outset that much of the Montanist teaching was quite orthodox. In Rome Hermas warned: "Some true words he [the false prophet] does occasionally utter; for the devil fills him with his own spirit, in the hope that he may be able to overcome some of the righteous."¹⁵⁸ But this

¹⁵⁷ "Addunt etiam plenitudinem sancti Spiritus non per Apostolos Christo dante fuisse concessam, sed per illos suos pseudoprophetas aestimant impartitam, et separant se a catholica Ecclesia." Philastrius, Liber de Haeresibus, XLIX.

¹⁵⁸ Hermas, Mand., XI:3. τινὰ δὲ καὶ ῥήματα ἀληθῆ λαλεῖ· ὁ γὰρ διάβολος πληροῖ αὐτὸν τῷ αὐτοῦ πνεύματι, εἰ τινὰ δυνήσεται ῥῆξαι τῶν δικαίων.

could be said of all the heresies; every one contained a modicum of truth. At first the Church did not even take exception to the Montanist claims of prophecy, for as the anonymous writer quoted by Eusebius is quick to admit, "The Apostle grants that the prophetic gift shall be in the Church until the final coming."¹⁵⁹

The original objection of the bishops to Montanism was the insistence that prophecy be given in ecstasy. Such practices savoured too much of the Cybele and the other mystery rites for acceptance in the Church. Clement of Alexandria even regarded the presence of ecstasy as a sure proof of false prophecy. He writes: "But among the lies, the false prophets also told some true things. And in reality they prophesied 'in an ecstasy', as the servants of 'the apostate.'"¹⁶⁰ This voluntary abnegation of reason and the emotional extravagances which ensued were rightly regarded with suspicion by orthodox Christianity. Though the Anonymous quoted by Eusebius was violently antagonistic to the Phrygian cult, his reaction can be considered fairly representative of the bishops' point of view:

¹⁵⁹ Eusebius, H.E., V:17:4. δεῖν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ προφητικὸν χάρισμα ἐν πάσῃ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ μέχρι τῆς τελείας παρουσίας τοῦ ἀποστόλου ἀξίον.

¹⁶⁰ Clem. Alex., Strom., I:17. Ἐν δὲ τοῖς ψεύδεσι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ τινὰ ἔλεγον οἱ ψευδοπροφήται. καὶ τῷ ὄντι οὗτοι ἐν "ἐκστάσει" προεφήτευσον, ὡς ἂν "ἀποστάτου." διάκονοι.

And yet cf. Athenagoras, Legat., VII, IX. Vide supra pp. 124ff. esp. footnote #101.

He [Montanus] began to be ecstatic and to speak and to talk strangely, prophesying contrary to the custom which belongs to the tradition and succession of the Church from the beginning. . . . And he stirred up besides himself two women and filled them with the bastard spirit so that they talked madly and unreasonably and strangely.¹⁶¹

In short, he concludes, "The false prophet falls into ecstasy, in which he is without shame or fear. Beginning with voluntary ignorance, he passes on to involuntary madness of soul, as has been stated."¹⁶² From this we gather that there were two main points of contention: first, that the Montanists departed from the tradition of the Church and thereby threatened the unity of the whole, and second, that the emotional frenzies of their prophets debased their religious life. The Montanist claim that they were in a direct succession of prophets was denounced as historically indefensible,¹⁶³ and

¹⁶¹ Apud Eusebium, H.E., V:16:7,9. παρεκστάσει γενόμενον ἐν θουσιᾷ ἀρξασθαι τε λαλεῖν καὶ ξενοφωνεῖν, παρὰ τὸ κατὰ παράδοσιν καὶ κατὰ διαδοχὴν ἄνωθεν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἔθος δῆθεν προφητεύοντα. . . . ὥς καὶ ἑτέρας τινὰς δύο γυναῖκας ἐπεχειρά καὶ τοῦ νόθου πνεύματος πληρῶσαι, ὥς καὶ λαλεῖν ἐκφρόνως καὶ ἀκαίρως καὶ ἄλλοτριοτρόπως.

¹⁶² Ibid., V:17:3. ἀλλ' ὁ γε ψευδοπροφήτης ἐν παρεκστάσει, ᾧ ἔπεται ἄδεια καὶ ἀφοβία, ἀρχομένου μὲν ἐξ ἐκουσίας ἀμαθίας, καταστρέφοντος δὲ εἰς ἀκούσιον μανίαν ψυχῆς, ὥς προεῖρηται.
Cf. Rufus Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion, p. 12.

¹⁶³ Eusebium, H.E., V:17:4. As a matter of fact, this accusation of the Anonymous was not true. We know of several Montanist prophets in North Africa of a later date. But this type of attack is interesting; later the orthodox position shifted completely.

over against it was placed the traditional authority of the apostolic succession.¹⁶⁴

Ever sensitive to threats against the unity of the Church, Irenaeus lashes out, "Wretched men indeed! [Montanists] who wish to be pseudoprophets, but who set aside the gift of prophecy from the Church."¹⁶⁵ However, the damage was already done. The Church lost all faith in any prophetic expression outside the strictly ecclesiastical pronouncements of its own leaders. Tradition became the exalted norm of faith and practice. Even before Montanism was condemned by regularly appointed councils of the Church,¹⁶⁶ it was evident that the free unity of the Spirit had been abandoned, and a substitute had to be found.

Meantime another expression of Montanism had risen in the West which was destined to have a more far-reaching effect on the Church than its eastern counterpart. For a long time, historians regarded both eastern and western Montanism as being one and the same thing. This, however, only led to confusion. More problems were created by such a presupposition than were solved. Thanks partly to the labours of Harnack but even more to H. J. Lawlor, it is now fairly well established that the two are quite

¹⁶⁴ Eusebius, H.E., II:25:6 and III: 31:4.

¹⁶⁵ "Infelices vere, qui pseudoprophetae quidem esse volunt; prophetica vero gratiam repellunt ab Ecclesia." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:11:9.

¹⁶⁶ For a record of these councils, vide Hefele, History of the Church Councils to A.D. 325, pp. 77ff. Cf. James Mackinnon, From Christ to Constantine, p. 320.

distinct.¹⁶⁷ Whereas the Phrygians had violent ecstasies and claimed the prophetic gift by way of succession from Agabus, Judas, Silas and the daughters of Philip, Tertullian spoke of controlled ecstasies and claimed no succession.¹⁶⁸ Women were given a high place in the Phrygian cult, speaking in church, holding high offices, and administering the sacraments, but Tertullian forbade women from even speaking in church.¹⁶⁹ The Phrygians named Pepuza as the New Heavenly Jerusalem, while Tertullian looked to the Jerusalem in Judaea.¹⁷⁰ In short, whereas the eastern Montanists placed their greatest emphasis on prophetic utterances, other psychic phenomena, and fervid chiliasm, in the West the movement took the form of a reaction against the secularization of the Church and the moral laxity of clergy and laity alike.

In the main, Tertullian's Montanism appealed for three things in the Church. It was his desire, first, to preserve within the Church a free expression of the Spirit through the laity. While avoiding the hysterical demonstrations current in Phrygia, he felt it would be equally disastrous to outlaw the free operation of the Spirit

¹⁶⁷ Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, pp. 94ff. esp. footnote #2 on p. 105; H.J. Lawlor, Eusebiana, pp. 108-135.

¹⁶⁸ Eusebius, H.E., V:17:3f.; Tertullian, De anima, IX, XI, XII, XLV; De ieiun., 3.

¹⁶⁹ Eusebius, H.E., V:16:9; Epiphanius, Haer., XLIX:2f.; Tertullian, De virg. vel., 9.

¹⁷⁰ Eusebius, H.E., V:18:2,13; Epiphanius, Haer., XLIX:1 and XLVIII:4; Tertullian, Contra Marcion, III:24.

altogether. Visions, revelations, and prophecies were not to be denounced but only examined carefully by the authorities and kept within the bounds of decency and order. To illustrate his point, Tertullian cited a case within his own experience:

We have now among us a sister whose lot it has been to be favoured with various gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the Church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men's hearts she understands, and to them who are in need she distributes remedies. . . . After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen [in the vision] (for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed).¹⁷¹

This sort of spiritual activity was not restricted to the services of worship, for he relates, "A brother was punished in a vision, because on the announcement of public rejoicings his servant had decorated his gates [a pagan custom]." ¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ "Est hodie soror apud nos revelationum charismata sortita, quas in ecclesia inter dominica solemnia per ecstasin in spiritu patitur; conversatur cum angelis, aliquando etiam cum Domino, et videt et audit sacramenta, et quorundam corda dignoscit, et medicinas desiderantibus submittit. . . . Post transacta sollemnia, dimissa plebe, quo uso solet nobis renuntiare quae viderit (nam et diligentissime digeruntur, ut etiam probentur)." Tertullian, De anima, 9. Cf. also De spectaculis, 26.

At the same time Tertullian recognized differences of opinion on matters of custom. These should not be allowed to destroy the unity of the Church. In the matter of the veiling of virgins, for example, there were some churches which insisted upon it while others had abandoned the practice. Still, cries Tertullian passionately, "We share with them the law of peace and the name of brotherhood. They and we have one faith, one God, the same Christ, the same hope, the same baptismal sacraments; let me say it once for all, we are one Church."¹⁷³

The second appeal Tertullian wished to make was for a more spiritual and less sacerdotal administration of ecclesiastical affairs. With dismay, he noted that priests and bishops not only claimed the right of spiritual leadership but arrogated to themselves almost every function in the Church. No longer could a layman pray directly to God and receive direct blessings in return; it had to be done through a priest. In particular, Tertullian resented the Roman claim to forgive any sin at will, in the name of God. Such a right could not be taken by any priest or bishop; rather it was the prerogative alone of those

¹⁷² "Scio fratrem per visionem castigatum graviter, quod januam ejus, subit annunciatis gaudiis publicis, servi coronassent." Tertullian, De idolatria, 15.

¹⁷³ "Communicamus cum Psychicus jus pacis et nomen fraternitatis. Una nobis et illis fides, unus Deus, idem Christus, eadem spes, eadem lavacri sacramenta. Semel dixerim, una ecclesia sumus!" Tertullian, De virg. vel., 2.

individuals whose lives and acts exhibited the spiritual power which was God's seal of His delegated authority.

With telling eloquence, Tertullian reasoned:

Discipline governs a man, power sets a seal upon him; apart from the fact that power is the Spirit, but the Spirit is God. . . . And so, if it were agreed that the blessed Apostles themselves had granted any such indulgence, the pardon of which comes from God, not from man, it would be efficacious for them to have done so, not in the exercise of discipline, but of power. For they both raised the dead, which God alone can do, and restored the debilitated to their integrity, which none but Christ can do. . . . Exhibit therefore even now to me, apostolic sir, prophetic evidences, that I may recognize your divine virtue, and vindicate to yourself the power of remitting such sins.¹⁷⁴

As he then goes on to say, the forgiveness of sins rests with the Church of the Spirit administered by a spiritual man rather than the Church consisting of a number of bishops.¹⁷⁵

If Tertullian's teaching had gone no further than

174 "Disciplina hominem gubernat, potestas adsignit. Sed rursum quid potestas spiritus, spiritus autem deus. . . . Itaque si et ipsos beatos apostolos tale aliquid indulgisse constaret, cuius venia a deo, non ab homine competeret, non ex disciplina, sed ex potestate fecissent. Nam et mortuos suscitaverunt, quod deus solus, et debiles redintegraverunt, quod nemo nisi Christus. . . . Exhibe igitur et nunc mihi, apostolice, prophetica exempla, ut agnoscam divinitatem, et vindica tibi delectorum eiusmodi remittendorum potestas." Tertullian, De pudicitia, 21.

175 "Et ideo ecclesia quidem delicta donabit, sed ecclesia spiritus per spiritalem hominem, non ecclesia numerus episcoporum. Domini enim, non famuli est jus et arbitrium; dei ipsius, non sacerdotis." Tertullian, De pudicitia, 21.

these two appeals, he might have won his point. There have always been a large number of devoted Christians in every age who secretly agree with his objections to a non-spiritual Church and a rigid sacerdotalism. But his chances of success were destroyed by a third appeal: he called for recognition of a continuing revelation unfettered by subservience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

According to Montanist teaching, there is a continuous progression of divine revelation which beginning with the prophetic voices of the Old Testament passes on to the teaching of Christ and finally culminates with the Phrygian prophets.¹⁷⁶ Such a belief, argued Tertullian, was not only orthodox, but it was the best defence against Gnosticism, for the Paraclete not only confirms the orthodox faith but by prophetic utterances clears up dubious passages of Scripture.¹⁷⁷ Thus, no difficulty of the faith need be feared; a new revelation will be forthcoming to meet every obscurity and every doubt. The Paraclete teaches things which even the Apostles were unable to understand.¹⁷⁸ Then, in a fine burst of oratory, he scathingly asks:

¹⁷⁶ "Prophetica vox veteris Testamenti, . . . disciplina Domini, . . . Spiritus Sanctus per sanctam prophetidem Priscam." Tertullian, De exhort. cast., 10. Cf. De virg. vel., 1.

¹⁷⁷ Vide Tertullian, De fuga, 1, 14; De corona, 4; De virg. vel., 1; Adv. Prax., 2, 13, 30; De resurrectione, 63; De pudicitia, 1; De monogamia, 2; De jejuniis, 10, 11.

¹⁷⁸ Tertullian, De monogamia, 2. Cf. Adv. Prax., 2 and esp. 13: "Nos, qui et tempora et causas scripturarum per Dei gratiam inspicimus, maxime Paracleti non hominem discipuli."

For what kind of supposition is it, that, while the devil is always operating and adding daily to the ingenuities of iniquity, the work of God should either have ceased, or else have stopped advancing? The reason why the Lord sent the Paraclete was, that, since human mediocrity was unable to take all things at once, discipline should, little by little, be directed, and ordained, and carried on to perfection by that Vicar of the Lord, the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁹

This, however, was not the real issue. All Christians were agreed that the Holy Spirit was active in promoting a correct interpretation of Scripture. It was when the New Prophecy contradicted Scripture that the orthodox bishops took exception. Tertullian tried to forestall their criticisms by denying that such a contradiction occurred:

"It follows," you say, "that by this line of argument, anything you please which is novel or burdensome may be ascribed to the Paraclete, even if it come from the adversary spirit." No, of course not. For the adversary spirit would be apparent from the diversity of his preaching, beginning by adulterating the rule of faith, and so leading up to adulterating the order

¹⁷⁹ "Quale est enim ut diabolo semper operante et adjiciente quotidie ad iniquitatis ingenia, opus Dei aut cessaverit, aut proficere destiterit? cum propterea Paracletum miserit Dominus, ut quoniam humana mediocritas omnia semel capere non poterat, paulatim dirigeretur, et ordinarotur, et ad perfectum perduceretur disciplina, ab illo vicario Domini Spiritu sancto." Tertullian, De virg. vel., 1.

of discipline.¹⁸⁰

But it was useless. The contradictions were too plain to gloss over, and Tertullian even admitted the fact when he asked, "If Christ abrogated what Moses commanded, because from the beginning it was not so . . . why should the Paraclete not alter what Paul permitted?"¹⁸¹ In such cases, the Montanists adverted to the incompleteness of Christ's revelation (John 16:12f.), saying, "Our Lord Christ has surnamed Himself Truth, not Custom."¹⁸² Such clever devices, however, were of no avail. Christ's teaching concerning the Paraclete never hinted that the instructions of the latter would contravene what He had taught. On the contrary, the tenor of our Lord's words are intelligible only if they are taken as meaning that the Paraclete would explain what Christ had already revealed. The new revelation of God would consist not in a departure from His will in the past but in a further unfolding of what has been present in the mind of Christ from the beginning.

Though Tertullian's reasoned eloquence had far more

¹⁸⁰ "Ergo hac argumentatione quidvis novum Paraclete adscribi poterit; etsi ab adversario spiritu fuerit. Non utique; adversarius enim spiritus ex diversitate praedicationis appareret, primo regulam adulterans fidei, et ita ordinem adulterans disciplinae." Tertullian, De monogamia, 2.

¹⁸¹ "Si enim Christus abstulit quod Moysis praecepit, quia ab initio non fuit . . . cur non et Paracletus abstulerit quod Paulus indulsit?" Ibid., 14.

¹⁸² "Dominus noster Christus veritatem se, non consuetudinem cognominavit." Tertullian, De virg. vel., 1. Cf. John 14:6.

appeal than the crude extravagances of the Phrygian prophets, both failed to stem the changing attitude of the Church. In fact the shift away from Spirit consciousness was only accelerated by the Montanist reaction. As a result of the conflict, chiliasm fell into general disrepute; as prophetism was discredited the priestly office was increasingly exalted; and, what was even more important for the subsequent development of Christianity, a sharp distinction was drawn between the apostolic age and the subsequent history of the Church.¹⁸³ Did the Church make a mistake by denouncing Montanism in toto? It is easy from the vantage point of eighteen centuries to say that it did. But our judgment might not be so facile had we been placed in the maelstrom of the second century when the Church battled not only cruel persecution from without but the more subtle temptations of Gnosticism and Montanism from within. The easy tolerance of the early years would have made Christianity degenerate into another eclectic religion and would have robbed it of its distinctive message. That the Church lost much by its arbitrary excommunications cannot be denied, but it is no idle conjecture to wonder if she might not have lost more had she taken any other course.

¹⁸³ Cf. Harnack, The History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 103; H.M. Gwatkin, Early Church History to A.D. 313, vol. II, pp. 91ff.

Chapter IV

DOCTRINE AND TRADITION

Τέκνα οὖν φωτὸς καὶ ἀληθείας, φεύγετε τὸν
 μερισμὸν καὶ τὰς κακοδιδασκαλίας· ὅπου δὲ
 ὁ ποιμὴν ἐστίν, ἐκεῖ ὡς πρόβατα ἀκολουθεῖτε.
 πολλοὶ γὰρ λύκοι ἀξιόπιστοι ἡδονῇ κακᾷ
 αἰχμαλωτίζουσιν τοὺς θεοδρόμους· ἀλλ'
 ἐν τῇ ἐνότι ὑμῶν οὐχ ἔξουσιν τόπον. 1

The Church emerged from her struggle with Montanism more aware than ever of the divisive tendencies in her midst. Montanism was but one of many heresies which were flourishing on the fringe of Christianity and were constantly competing for the allegiance of orthodox Christians. To overcome this menace it was absolutely essential that the Catholic Church become strongly and effectively unified. That this had not been accomplished before was due partly to the rapidity of the Church's growth and partly to the refusal of the Roman State to license Christianity as a religio licita. Though there was considerable intercourse among Christians of the Empire, it became exceedingly difficult for groups of Church leaders to confer on matters of dispute. When questions of polity, doctrine, and practice arose, they had to be settled in whatever way was most expedient at the time. It is hardly surprising, then, to find a vast diversity throughout Christendom by the middle of the second century. Occasionally, outstanding churchmen did travel to a distant

Ignatius, Philad., 2.

church for the purpose of discussion with other leaders,² but the outcome of their conversations rarely carried ecumenical authority.

Perhaps the most representative council of the Church was the local synod which consisted of delegated representatives from the churches of a restricted geographical area, such as a province or group of adjacent administrative areas. It was through synods that nearly all the ante-Nicene heresies were examined and condemned. But even synods were definitely local in character, and they had to be held in a more or less clandestine fashion.³ In the periods of relative peace, however, between times of savage persecution, the Church was able to carry on its affairs more openly and effectively, but by then local differences had become strongly entrenched.

Many churchmen in the East saw no cause for alarm in a certain amount of local variation in customs, but to the Roman legalism of the West such diversity was not only abhorrent but even dangerous. Differences of practice stemmed from differences of thought, and differences of thought were closely allied to differences of belief and doctrine. Hence, local differences should be stamped out, the Church should be made uniformly hierarchical, and even the bishops should be arranged in an ascending scale

² As, for instance, Ignatius, Polycarp, Hegesippus, etc.

³ Cf. Streeter, The Primitive Church, pp. 256f. and Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. II, pp. 312ff.

of authority until final rule should be vested in a single ecclesiastic - the bishop of Rome.

Of course, such a view did not evolve all at once, but the direction was apparent. Equally apparent was the determined opposition of many bishops. Such drastic regimentation was entirely alien to the Eastern Christians, particularly, and even to some Western ones as well. They thought of Christ's words: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave."⁴ Further, it was obvious that any rash attempt to force uniformity upon the Church would only result in schism and division to the destruction of that very unity which it was the passionate desire of all to preserve.

On the other hand, East and West were agreed that orthodox doctrine was of the very essence of the faith, and here there was general unanimity. As Harnack puts it: "The majority of bishops were of the opinion of Irenaeus, that, provided there was unity of doctrine, and provided love was supreme, any differences of custom were irrelevant or had to be put up with."⁵ This general

⁴ Matt. 20:25-27; cf. Mark 9:35; Luke 14:11; 18:14; 22:24-27.

⁵ Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. II, p. 315.

principle met its decisive test over the Paschal question.⁶ In most of the churches of Asia Minor, Easter was celebrated on the same day as the Jewish passover feast, the fourteenth of Nisan, irrespective of what day in the week the feast fell. For the rest of Christendom, Easter was generally celebrated on the first Lord's Day following the first full moon of the vernal equinox.⁷ In both East and West, Easter was preceded by a fast. It was this fact which created the dissension, for wherever adherents of both customs met, some would be commencing the feast while others still fasted.

To resolve this awkward situation, the aged Polycarp made a special journey to Rome between 150 and 155 A.D. where he conferred with the Roman bishop, Anicetus.⁸ A short conversation soon revealed that both observances were backed by venerable tradition, the Eastern one going back as far as St. John in Ephesus, and the Western to Pope Xystus in Rome. Because of this

⁶ The sources on this interesting controversy are, unfortunately, fragmentary. Eusebius (H.E., IV:26; V:23-25) gives us the most complete account, but Jerome (De Viris Illustribus, 34f.; and Chronicles under the year 196) has a note on the subject. A few additional fragments have been preserved in the Chronicon Paschale (Vide Migne, Patrologia Graeca, vol. 92, pp. 80ff.). The books by Melito of Sardis, Apolinarius of Hierapolis (except for two fragments preserved in the Chronicon Paschale), Clement of Alexandria, Victor of Rome, and Irenaeus on the question have, alas, all been lost. Cf. Hefele, A History of the Christian Councils to A.D. 325, pp. 80ff.; Schaff, Church History, vol. II, pp. 209-220; B.J. Kidd, A History of the Church to A.D. 461, vol. I, pp. 182f., 354ff., 376ff.; Joseph Schmid, Die Osterfestfrage auf dem Ersten Allgemeinen Konzil von Nicäa.

⁷ Eusebius, H.E., V:23:1.

⁸ Ibid., V:24:14-17.

strong historical tradition, neither Polycarp nor Anicetus felt justified in altering his position, but despite the failure of the conference the two parted amicably after "Anicetus conceded the celebration of the eucharist in the church to Polycarp, manifestly as a mark of respect."⁹ Thus the peace of the Church was maintained even if the problem of Easter was not solved.

A few years later, however, the issue arose again, this time in Laodicea which resulted in a sharp literary debate. These writings, however, have almost entirely disappeared, and some doubt exists as to the true nature of the dispute.¹⁰ The climax was reached between 190 and 194 A.D. when Victor of Rome tried to force the eastern churches into conformity with the western practice. He was not without some provocation, it is true. Blastus, an Asiatic who had settled at Rome,¹¹ attempted to persuade some of the local clergy to observe the Quartadecimanian practice. Not only did this upset the peace of the Christian community, but Blastus was a Montanist and a

⁹ Eusebius, H.E., V:24:17. ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ παρεχώρησεν ὁ Ἀνίκητος τὴν εὐχαριστίαν τῷ Πολυκάρπῳ, κατ' ἐντροπὴν δηλονότι.

¹⁰ All our evidence is contained in a short notice by Eusebius (H.E., IV:26) and the two fragments of Apollinarius mentioned above. Schaff and McGiffert both deny that there were more than one party of Quartadecimnians, but B.J. Kidd confidently asserts that there was an orthodox party and a Judaizing party. The evidence, I feel, is too fragmentary to be dogmatic. At all events, it was merely a continuation of the same dispute which reached its climax in the time of Victor. Cf. Duchesne, The Early History of the Christian Church, vol. I, p. 209.

¹¹ Eusebius, H.E., V:15 and 20.

Judaizer. It may be that Victor concluded that all three went together and therefore denounced all Quartadecimarians as heretics. Finally, Victor determined to end these intolerable conditions, so he called a synod and a similar synod was called in Palestine. The outcome was complete agreement on the western practice.¹² Thereupon Victor, in an imperious letter, ordered the churches of Asia Minor to desist from their form of Paschal observance and to revert to the custom held by the rest of Christendom. His letter is no longer extant, but Eusebius records the reply of Polycrates which was a spirited defense of the Asiatic custom.¹³ He adverted to some of the great leaders from whom their Paschal tradition had come: John, Philip, Polycarp, and others, and then he concluded, "I am not afraid of threats, for they who were greater than I have said, 'It is better to obey God rather than men.'" ¹⁴

Victor replied by excommunicating the dissenting Asians and attempted to get other bishops to follow his example. This hasty action, however, produced quite the opposite result. Not only the bishops of Asia but many others who agreed with Victor in principle rebuked him for disrupting the Church. As usual, Irenaeus led the way in a letter to Victor which Eusebius has preserved.¹⁵

¹² Eusebius, H.E., V:23:2f.

¹³ Ibid., V:24:2ff.

¹⁴ Ibid., V:24:7. ἐγὼ . . . οὐ πτόρομαι ἐπὶ τοῖς καταπλησσομένοις· οἱ γὰρ ἐμοῦ μείζονες εἰρήκασιν πειθαρχεῖν δεῖ θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρώποις.

¹⁵ Ibid., V:24:11ff.

In it the good Bishop of Lyons deplored the disruption of the Church through Victor's unwarranted excommunication, and the Roman pontiff was reminded that his predecessors had faced the same circumstances with far happier results. We do not know the outcome of this particular disruption except that the Quartadecimarians were formally condemned at the Council of Nicaea.

The controversy is important because it demonstrated that many bishops were eager to preserve the right of individual preference in the matter of ritual and practice while agreeing in principle that unity of doctrine must be upheld at all costs.¹⁶ Irenaeus well expressed the general temper when he wrote: "True knowledge is . . . the pre-eminent gift of love, which is more precious than knowledge, more glorious than prophecy, and which excels all other gifts."¹⁷ Far more important than differences of local practice was the sacred unity of the Church. Especially is this true when, as he points out in another place:

The apostles ordained that we should not judge any one in respect to meat

¹⁶ Cf. Jerome, De Viris Illustribus, 35: "Feruntur ejus et aliae ad Victorem episcopum Romanum de questione Paschae epistolae: in quibus commonet eum, non facile debere unitatem collegii scindere. Si quidem Victor multos Asiae et Orientis episcopos, qui decima quarta luna cum Judaeis Pascha celebrabant, damnandos crediderat. In quae sententia hi, qui discrepabant ab illis, Victori non dederunt manus."

¹⁷ "Agnitio vera est . . . praecipuum delectionis munus, quod est pretiosius quam agnitio gloriosius autem quam prophetia, omnibus autem reliquis charismatibus sperementius." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:33:8.

or drink, or in regard to a feast day, or the new moons, or the sabbaths [Col. 2:16]. Whence then these contentions? Whence these schisms? We keep the feast, but in the leaven of malice and wickedness, cutting in pieces the Church of God; and we preserve what belongs to its exterior, that we may cast away these better things, faith and love. We have heard from the prophetic words [perhaps Isa. 1:14] that these feasts and fasts are displeasing to the Lord.¹⁸

This spirit of tolerance is more indigenous to the Eastern Church than to the West. (Irenaeus, of course, was Eastern in his thought and background even though he was bishop of Lyons.) Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, exemplified the general temper when he wrote to Cyprian. Pope Stephen of Rome was trying to force his opinions upon the Eastern churches, and they reacted violently. Firmilian, in a long outburst, objected:

But that they who are at Rome do not observe those things in all cases which are handed down from the beginning, and vainly pretend the

¹⁸ "Ordinaverunt apostoli, non oportere nos iudicare quenquam in esca vel potu vel parte festi aut neomeniae aut sabbatorum. Unde igitur hae disceptationes? Unde schismata? Feriamur, sed in fermento malitiae et malignitatis, ecclesiam Dei scindentes, et externa servamus, ut meliora, fidem et caritatem abiciamus. Haec igitur ferias et ieiunia displicere Domino ex sermonibus prophetis audivimus." This interesting fragment was discovered by a Lutheran scholar named Pfaff in the Royal Library at Turin in 1715. It may have come from the Epistle to Blastus, De Schismate (cf. Eusebius, H.E., V: 20:1 and Adv. Haer., IV:33:7). Though the fragment subsequently disappeared, there seems to be no question of its authenticity. See W.W. Harvey's note in his edition of Irenaeus, vol. I, pp. clxxi ff. and the copious discussion by Stieren in his edition, vol. I. This is fragment No. 39 in Stieren, vol. I, p. 887.

authority of the apostles, any one may know also from the fact, that concerning the celebration of Easter, and concerning many other sacraments of divine matters, he may see that there are some diversities among them . . . and yet on this account there is no departure at all from the peace and unity of the Catholic Church.¹⁹

But even in the West there was more freedom than one might expect, as the attitude of the bishops to Victor amply illustrates. Tertullian, writing two or three decades later, is a strong exponent of independence as to form and ceremony. Of course where a definite dictum from the Lord or the Apostles could be adduced, the question was settled,²⁰ but if no command on a particular issue could be found in the Scriptures, then the Church should all adhere to the custom of the majority for the sake of order. In the event, however, that a minority had strong scruples against the general custom and preferred a different one, the Church should accept the variant practice with Christian charity.²¹ Above all the unity of the Church must be preserved.²² In the case

¹⁹ "Eos autem qui Romae sunt non ea in omnibus observare quae sint ab origine tradita et frustra apostolorum auctoritatem praetendere scire quis etiam inde potest, quod circa celebrandos dies Paschae et circa multa alia divinae rei sacramenta videat esse apud illos aliquas diversitatis . . . nec tamen propter hoc ab ecclesiae catholicae pace atque unitate aliquando discessum est." Cyprian, Ep., 75:6.

²⁰ Cf. Tertullian, De Orat., 15. After he became a Montanist his views on this matter changed.

²¹ Ibid., 23.

²² Tertullian, De virg. vel., 2.

of doctrine alone must rigid uniformity be demanded; in all else, charity should be the rule.²³

Such an attitude is not too surprising in a rugged individualist like Tertullian, but when the same thing is encountered in Cyprian it is an interesting phenomenon. Cyprian points with obvious approval at bishops who refused to break communion with their episcopal brethren, even though they were in radical disagreement over the severity of Church discipline.²⁴ He himself refused to dictate to other bishops lest their free judgment should thereby be impaired.²⁵

This spirit of tolerance, however, was never held with regard to doctrine. From the very first, every attempt to tamper with the διδασχῇ brought forth angry denunciation by the Apostles. "As we have said before, so now I say again, if any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed!"²⁶ And these stern words of Paul are shared by the rest of the New Testament writers. "For," warns John, "many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may

²³ Tertullian, De baptismo, 15, 17-19.

²⁴ Cyprian, Ep., 55:21.

²⁵ Ibid., 73:26.

²⁶ Gal. 1:9. Cf. 2:2,9; II Cor. 11:3f.; Heb. 13:9.

win a full reward. Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting; for he who greets him shares in his wicked work."²⁷ Peter, too, calls for preparedness against heretical doctrines.²⁸ James goes even further in suggesting that Christians generally should avoid the teaching office lest it tempt them to misrepresent or depart from the faith.²⁹

The emphasis throughout is on the unchangeableness of the apostolic teaching as derived from the Scriptures and the works and words of the Lord.³⁰ This teaching has been faithfully passed along by the Apostles and other Church leaders,³¹ so that every exposition of Scripture should be in conformity with the apostolic tradition.³² It would appear, in fact, that one of the main reasons, if not the principal one, for the rise of the episcopate

²⁷ II John 7-11. Cf. I John 2:26; III John 3; Rev. 2:6,14-16; Jude 3.

²⁸ I Peter 3:15. The savage outburst against heretics in II Peter, while probably not of Petrine authorship, shows how the attack increased rather than abated with the passage of time. Vide 2:1-3,9-22; 3:3-9,15-17.

²⁹ James 3:1. Cf. 1:19,21.

³⁰ II Tim. 3:14ff. Cf. I Tim. 6:2-4,20f.; II Tim. 1:13.

³¹ I Cor. 11:23; 15:3,11; II Thess. 2:15. Note conjunction of παράδοσις or παραδίδωμι and διδασκαλία as in Rom. 6:17.

³² II Peter 1:20. Cf. I Tim. 4:6ff.; II Tim. 1:13f.

was to preserve the παράδοσις unaltered.³³ Titus is told, "But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine."³⁴ And Timothy is then ordered, "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."³⁵ Finally, "Avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels,"³⁶ for they are futile and unprofitable. With such Scriptural precedent, it was only natural for those bishops who opposed Victor's high-handed methods to find in pure doctrine the unity of the Church. Here, they averred, was the esse of the Church, the sure sign that Christ was still the Head and that the Holy Spirit dwelt therein. In all other matters a certain amount of variety was to be expected and accepted in the spirit of charity.

To support their case further, the bishops could point toward the necessity of a vigorous unified opposition to the many heretical teachings³⁷ which were making

³³ I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9-11.

³⁴ Titus 2:1.

³⁵ II Tim. 2:2. Cf. I Clement, 42:4f.; 44:1f.

³⁶ Titus 3:9. Cf. II Thess. 3:6; II Tim. 2:14ff., 23ff.

³⁷ Cf. Maurice Goguel, "Unité et diversité du christianisme primitif," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, 1939 (No. 1), p. 11f.: "Qu'est-ce à proprement parler que l'hérésie? C'est l'opinion particulière d'un individu ou d'un groupe qui prétend s'opposer ou se substituer à l'opinion commune de l'Eglise, que celle-ci ait été officiellement formulée ou non. L'hérésie compromettant l'unité de l'Eglise, la réaction provoquée par elle doit être considérée comme une réaction de défense par laquelle l'Eglise a essayé d'écarter ce qui lui paraissait contredire ses traditions et menacer, avec son unité, son existence même."

dangerous inroads among the faithful. It would take all the resources of the Church to combat this threat; to sap the energy of the Church in internecine warfare over secondary issues might well prove disastrous. It is true that from the very beginning the Christian community had to deal with teachers of false doctrines,³⁸ but in the time of Irenaeus the menace of this kind of attack had increased many fold. Eusebius speaks of the heretics as tares which were destroying the pure harvest, and he tells of the strenuous efforts made to suppress them.³⁹

The chief danger came from the fact that whereas at first only individuals proposed doctrines out of conformity with the Christian tradition - individuals who could be dealt with in the normal course of Church discipline - later there arose whole schools of thought which combined Christian and pagan elements in a highly complex synthesis. It was the natural outcome of an eclectic age meeting a vigorous and successful new religious movement. The religious philosophies which abounded in the Roman Empire of the late Augustan age tried both to explain and appropriate the latest competitor for the spiritual allegiance of mankind.⁴⁰ The result was a hybrid, or rather a whole

³⁸ Cf. Titus 3:10,11.

³⁹ Eusebius, H.E., IV:24.

⁴⁰ "The cheerful asceticism, the powers of the spiritual and the good which were seen in the Christian communities, attracted them [the Gnostics] and seemed to require the addition of theory to practice. Theory without being followed by practice had long been in existence, but here was the as yet rare phenomenon of a moral practice which seemed to dispense with that which was regarded as

series of hybrids which have been loosely collected under the designation of Gnosticism.⁴¹

The importance of this development for the Christian Church was so enormous that a brief review of its principle features is necessary.⁴² No clear date for the origin of Gnosticism can be assigned, for it stems from the mystery cults of the East and the philosophic speculations of Hellenism. But it may be safely said to antedate Christianity,⁴³ though its flowering only came after it attached

40(cont.) indispensable, viz. theory. . . . That the Hellenic spirit in Gnosticism turned with such eagerness to the Christian communities and was ready even to believe in Christ in order to appropriate the moral powers which it saw operative in them, is a convincing proof of the extraordinary impression which these communities made." Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, pp. 235f. Cf. Origen's comment in Contra Celsum, III:12.

⁴¹ The study of Gnosticism is made difficult not only because of the paucity and disagreement of our chief sources but because of the many different languages in which the primary sources appear. e.g. Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, Slavonic, etc., as well as the more familiar Greek and Latin. Though the chief sources have been translated, many fragments remain in the original. It takes a formidable array of scholarly talents to overcome such a linguistic barrier, and I have made no attempt to do so. It has been thought sufficient for the purposes of this dissertation to rely on such translations as are available and on the detailed accounts of scholars who have worked with the originals.

⁴² For a brief treatment of the primary sources, vide M.R. James, The Apocryphal New Testament, pp. xxix ff. One of the best short treatments of the subject is by E.F. Scott, "Gnosticism," HERE, vol. 6, pp. 231ff. The most complete bibliographies, however, are to be found in the EB, 14th ed., vol. X, p. 455 and in Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 3rd. ed., vol. 6, p. 738. Also helpful are E. de Faye's Gnostiques et gnosticisme and Introduction à l'étude du gnosticisme as well as copious notes in Harvey and Stieren's editions of Irenaeus.

⁴³ For the roots of pre-Christian Gnosticism, cf. W. Bouasset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, pp. 5ff. and 21ff.

itself to the Christian faith. The earliest connection between Christianity and Gnosticism is shrouded in obscurity. Some of the heretics mentioned in the New Testament may have been Gnostics, e.g. Nicolaus,⁴⁴ Phygelus and Hermogenes,⁴⁵ Hymenaeus and Philetus,⁴⁶ and Simon Magus.⁴⁷ But aside from these scattered and vague references, our only sources are the heresiologies of the Church Fathers, mostly dating from the third century and admittedly biased;⁴⁸ a few recovered fragments of Gnostic writings such as the Pistis Sophia⁴⁹ and the Epistle of Ptolemy to Flora;⁵⁰ and archaeological remains such as coins, amulets, inscriptions, magical ornaments, etc.⁵¹

Despite these meager remains, however, it is possible to reconstruct many of the Gnostic systems and see

⁴⁴ Acts 6:5; Rev. 2:6,15; Eusebius, H.E., III:29. Cf. M. Goguel, "Les Nicolaïtes," Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, Vol. CXV (1937), pp. 5-36.

⁴⁵ II Timothy 1:15.

⁴⁶ I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17.

⁴⁷ Acts 8:9ff. and Eusebius, H.E., II:13.

⁴⁸ A most exhaustive account of these sources is given in Harnack's Geschichte der Altchristlichen Litterature bis Eusebius, vol. I, pp. 143-231.

⁴⁹ Translated from the Coptic by George Horner, Cf. Coptic fragments edited and translated into German by Carl Schmidt in Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. VIII.

⁵⁰ Other sources that might be mentioned are the two Books of Jeu, the Naasene Hymn, many of the Apocryphal New Testament writings, and a few Coptic writings such as the Sophia Jesu Christi, etc.

⁵¹ These archaeological remains have been intensively studied in C.W. King's The Gnostics and their Remains.

the elements common to most of them. It is understood, of course, that very little can be said which would apply with equal truth to all. The greatest variety both of belief and practice is encountered among the various Gnostic sects. There is possibly more difference between Marcion and the Ophites or between Valentinus and the Carpocratians than between Marcion or Valentinus and the orthodox Christians. So every generalization on Gnosticism must carry with it a considerable number of exceptions and reservations. With this in mind, then, the following generalities obtain.

Gnosticism was, first of all, a heightened intellectualism, a "one-sided over-evaluation of knowledge at the expense of moral activity."⁵² By knowledge the Gnostics did not necessarily mean historical facts or what we would call today scientific knowledge, but rather it meant the results of complex theorizing and philosophical speculation. It was for this reason that James warned against teachers,⁵³ Paul cautioned against the use of "myths and endless genealogies which promote speculation,"⁵⁴ and John branded this sort of mental activity as "antichrist."⁵⁵ Because relatively few people were adept at or interested in the intellectual gymnastics of the Gnostics, they

⁵² Ernst von Dobschütz, Christian Life in the Primitive Church, p. 254. Cf. his excellent analysis of Gnosticism, pp. 251-266.

⁵³ James 3:1.

⁵⁴ I Tim. 1:4ff. Cf. 6:4,20; II Tim. 2:14,16,23; Titus 3:9.

⁵⁵ I John 2:18ff.; 4:1f.; II John 7ff.

regarded themselves as a spiritual élite to be distinguished from the profanum vulgus.⁵⁶ Though they considered themselves, in the main, as Christians, they held aloof from the Christian community and looked upon the "unenlightened" with a thinly-veiled contempt.⁵⁷ Thus the Gnostics posed a social as well as an intellectual problem to the Church.

Behind almost all Gnostic teaching lay a radical dualism which stemmed partly from Greek thought and partly from the religions of the East.⁵⁸ Matter is the ultimate evil and is the exact antithesis of spirit which is the source of all good. In order to explain the existence of the world with such a presupposition, the Gnostics found it necessary to hypothetize a complex system of emanations, thus removing the world of matter as far from the Ultimate God as possible. In so doing they had to pervert and allegorize Scripture, and they robbed Christ of His divinity or deprived Him of His physical nature. This the Church could not allow. The warped theology of the Gnostic sects led to a different sense of moral values from that held by orthodox Christians. As Paul charged, "They profess to

⁵⁶ Mankind was divided by the Gnostics into three groups: οἱ ὀλικοί (the pagans) whose end would be ultimate destruction; οἱ ψυχικοί (the orthodox Christians) who would have to go through further purification; and οἱ πνευματικοί (the Gnostics) who would attain immediately to eternal life. Cf. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:6.

⁵⁷ I John 2:9,19; 3:10f.; 4:7f.,20; Jude 19; Ignatius, Smyr., VI:2 and VII:1.

⁵⁸ Bousset traces the dualism of the Gnostic sects in great detail, showing their dependence on Oriental dualism and mythology: Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, pp. 91-119 and ff.

know God but they deny Him by their deeds."⁵⁹

Because matter is evil, the body also is evil, and from it comes all human vice and degradation. "For it is the body which maintains all these things."⁶⁰ As a result, morality for the Gnostic was largely a matter of personal asceticism. "Abstain from fornication, and covetousness, and the service of the belly."⁶¹ Even marriage was abjured as being a concession to the flesh by which more evil was brought into the world.⁶² Since women were considered the cause of lust in men, they were regarded as beings of a lower order than men with relatively little value.⁶³

Most of the larger Gnostic sects turned to extreme asceticism as a result of their dualistic tenets, but there were some who became openly licentious. Matter was not only evil but ephemeral and fated for ultimate extinction. Therefore it should be treated with the utmost contempt, and the easiest way of doing that was to engage

⁵⁹ Titus 1:16. Cf. *Hermas*, *Sim.*, IX:19:2; James 3:13.

⁶⁰ *Acta Thomae*, III:37. ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα ἀνθρώπου.

⁶¹ *Acta Thomae*, II:28. ἀπέχεσθε τῆς πορνείας καὶ τῆς πλεονεξίας καὶ τῆς ἐργασίας τῆς γαστρούς.

Compare with this the restrained asceticism of Paul: I Tim. 4:8 for whom sanctification comes not through asceticism but through εὐσέβεια.

⁶² Cf. I Tim. 4:3; *Gospel of the Egyptians* apud Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, III:6,9; *Acta Joh.*, 113; *Acta Thomae*, 1:12; *Acta Andreae*, 8 (in conversation with Maximilla).

⁶³ Cf. *Clementine Homilies*, III:22; *Gospel of the Egyptians*, apud Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, III:9.

in as many degenerate acts as possible. The soul, being unaffected by the flesh, would remain pure no matter how degraded the body was; such was their theory. It is possible that the Church Fathers exaggerated this tendency in Gnosticism, but that it did exist is too well attested to be challenged.⁶⁴

Many attempts have been made to classify the Gnostic sects in order to show their interrelation. Though some of these have been more successful than others, none of the detailed classifications have been very satisfying. Gnosticism was such a complex movement it practically defies such a treatment. About the only division that can be made is the very general one of early, late, and intermediate Gnosticism. Early and late Gnosticism had much in common; they seem to have had a closer connection to the East than the great systems of the intermediate period.⁶⁵ They emphasized magic, and used their *γνῶσις* in an attempt to control the highest powers rather than merely understand them. Among the Gnostics of the early period might be mentioned Simon Magus and another Samaritan, Menander of

⁶⁴ Cf. II Tim. 3:2ff.; Rev. 2:14,20; the Carpocratians, Cainites, and Prodicus as mentioned by Clem. Alex. Strom., III:4.

⁶⁵ This connection has been traced by Anrich, Das antike Mysterienwesen, especially in reference to the Egyptian magical papyri which give many clues to Gnostic practices (cf. esp. pp. 96ff.), though he tends to overstate the "gnosticism" of Clement of Alexandria (pp. 130 ff.). Cf. also Bousset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, pp. 5ff.

Cappartea, Dositheus and Cleobius,⁶⁶ Cerinthus,⁶⁷ Saturninus,⁶⁸ and others.

These early Gnostics are very shadowy figures indeed, some of them so encrusted with legend as to make the historical person largely invisible (e.g. Simon Magus). Much the same may be said about the late Gnostics as well. But the real flowering of Gnosticism was in the intermediate period. There is a real difference between the teaching of men like Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion and that of the Gnostics who came before and after. These three exhibit, as Dobschütz expresses it, the "results of theological reflection, they show a distinct advance in the Christian factor."⁶⁹ The Church felt itself more seriously threatened by this type of Gnosticism than it had in the earlier type, and it was spurred to defend its unity against these encroachments from without.

Professor Harnack has created the impression that the Gnostics were pioneers of theological thought while the orthodox churchmen who opposed them were reactionaries who refused to advance with the times.⁷⁰ Quite the

⁶⁶ Hegesippus apud Eusebius, H.E., IV:22:5; Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:23.

⁶⁷ Eusebius, H.E., III:28.

⁶⁸ Duchesne places Saturninus midway between the earliest Gnostics and the later systems of Basilides and Valentinus: The Early History of the Christian Church, vol. I, p. 117.

⁶⁹ Dobschütz, Christian Life in the Primitive Church, p. 252.

⁷⁰ "The position to be assigned to the Gnostics in the history of dogma, which has hitherto been always

opposite is true. Though the Gnostic speculation reminds one of a dazzling pyrotechnic display,⁷¹ it soon spent itself and was lost in the backwash of the political upheaval which marked the end of the Roman Empire. The orthodox doctrine, on the other hand, because it was based on solid historical fact, became stronger and more secure with the passage of time. Harnack practically assumes that "the Gnostic systems represent the . . . hellenizing of Christianity."⁷² "It is therefore no paradox to say that Gnosticism, which is just Hellenism, has in Catholicism obtained half a victory."⁷³

It would be a mistake to allow such a statement to

70(cont.) misunderstood, is obvious. They were in short, the Theologians of the first century. They were the first to transform Christianity into a system of doctrines (dogmas)." History of Dogma, vol. I, p. 227. This view has been strongly opposed by James Orr (The Progress of Dogma, pp. 55ff.). He writes, "The chief end these Fathers of the old Catholic period had in view was conservation - the preservation of the faith as they had received it - and the last thing they thought of was to give over Christianity to philosophy, or construct a new Gnosticism in the room of that which they combatted." p. 63.

71 "Wir stehen verwundert da, anstaunend die Kühnheit der Spekulationen, geblendet von der Fülle der Gedanken, ergriffen von der Gemütsiefe des Verfassers. . . . einer Zeit wo der gnostische Genius wie ein mächtiger Aar diese Welt hinter sich liess und in immer grösseren Kreisen dem reinen Lichte, der reinen Erkenntnis entgegeneilte und in derselben schwelgte." Carl Schmidt, "Gnostische Schriften in Koptischer Sprache aus dem Codex Brucianus," Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. VIII, pp. 34f.

72 Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, p. 226.

73 Ibid., p. 227. Harnack altered some of his views in the last edition of his work, but his position on the hellenic nature of Gnosticism remained unchanged. Cf. Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, 4th ed., pp. 250ff.

pass without serious qualification. Such a conclusion, indeed, as Harnack draws cannot be arrived at without summarily dismissing all the "fantastic details" which "in the case of the Gnostics themselves, have had the value of liturgical apparatus, the construction of which was not of course a matter of indifference, but hardly formed the principal interest."⁷⁴ That Hellenism exerted a profound influence on Gnostic thought cannot be gainsaid, but it is equally true that the speculative dualism of the East with its mythical apparatus took root in Gnosticism. As Bousset⁷⁵ and Anrich⁷⁶ have demonstrated, there is no justification for dismissing these Eastern elements as being of secondary importance. In fact, it would appear that Gnostic writings in many instances contain Oriental thought clothed with Greek forms rather than, as Harnack contends, Greek thought somewhat tinged with

⁷⁴ Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, p. 234. It is interesting to note that this vindication of free speculation was eagerly received by the cults which form the outer fringe of Christianity (e.g. the Theosophists, Bahaists, Spiritualists, Rosicrucians, New Thought, etc.) A Theosophist rhapsodizes: "Nevertheless their [the Gnostics'] 'heaven-storming', when we can understand its nature, is a spectacle to move our admiration and (if we cast aside all prejudice) make us bow our heads before the power which inspired their efforts. They strove for the knowledge of God, the science of realities, the gnosis of the things-that-are; wisdom was their goal; the holy things of life their study." G.R.S. Mead, Fragments of a Faith Forgotten, pp. 31f.

⁷⁵ Bousset, Hauptprobleme der Gnosis, pp. 91-119.

⁷⁶ Anrich, Das antike Mysterienwesen in seinem Einfluss auf das Christentum. Cf. the evidence of Clem. Alex. and Origen as collected by Hilgenfeld, Ketzergeschichte, esp. pp. 207ff. and 293ff.

Orientalism.

Such, then, was the threat which the Church faced. It was essentially an intellectual threat to the Church's unity, for as Gwatkin has rightly observed, "Gnosticism was rather a philosophy than a religion, as being commonly more interested in systems of the universe than in relations of worship."⁷⁷ The Church was not slow to take up the challenge and carry the battle into the enemy camp. Led by such acute thinkers as Irenaeus, the intellectual struggle was joined and the field chosen was the decisive one of doctrine. With this prayer on his lips, Irenaeus began his attack: "Grant by our Lord Jesus Christ, the governing power of the Holy Spirit; give to every reader of this book to know Thee, that Thou are God alone, to be strengthened in Thee, and to avoid every heretical, and godless, and impious doctrine."⁷⁸

Orthodox doctrine, as opposed to Gnostic tenets, was characterized by at least two main conditions. It was based, first of all, upon historical events. The Gospel as the Church preached it was firmly rooted in history - dates, reigns, events that actually happened. As recorded in the New Testament writings and handed down in the tradition of the Church, it was a corpus of

⁷⁷ H.M. Gwatkin, Early Church History to A.D. 313, vol. II, p. 21. Cf. his excellent analysis of the nature of Gnosticism in chap. XV.

⁷⁸ "Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum dominationem quoque dona Spiritus sancti: da omni legenti hanc scripturam agnoscere te, quia solus Deus es, et confirmari in te, et absistere ab omni haeretica, et quae est sine Deo, et impia sententia." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:6:4.

belief that was relatively stable and unchanged. The Gnostics, on the other hand, relied on speculation, allegory, and abstract systems of thought to derive their beliefs.⁷⁹ The result was a tremendously varied and heterogeneous doctrine which differed with each new Gnostic teacher.

The second characteristic of orthodox doctrine was the belief that it fulfilled prophecy. Thus was asserted the continuity of the Church's teaching with the past. Even as there is one God, so is there one plan of history, and the key to that plan is the redemptive act of God as prophesied in the old dispensation and fulfilled in the new. To overcome the opposition of the Jews and Judaizers, the Church Fathers followed the lead of St. Matthew in pointing to the great number of Old Testament prophecies which reach their fulfilment in the life and sayings of our Lord. For example, the virgin birth in Matthew 1:18ff. and Luke 1:26ff. was held to be the fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14.⁸⁰ Irenaeus frequently uses prophecy as proof against the assertions of the heretics. Thus, while attacking the Ebionites and Docetics, he argues:

⁷⁹ James Orr draws an interesting parallel between the Gnostic teachers Basilides, Valentinus, and Marcion and the German philosophers of the nineteenth century: Hegel, Schelling, and Ritschl. Though the similarity cannot be pressed too far, Professor Orr is correct in his view that Gnosticism was the development of a characteristic element in human thought which emerges under different guises in every age. The Progress of Dogma, p. 59.

⁸⁰ Cf. Justin Martyr, Apol., I:33; Dial. c. Trypho., 66-85.

If, however, they maintain that the Lord, too, performed such works simply in appearance, we shall refer them to the prophetical writings, and prove from these both that all things were thus predicted regarding Him, and did undoubtedly take place.⁸¹

Such characteristics of the orthodox doctrine as historicity and prophetical validation demanded an antecedent objective norm from which both could be derived. It was the absence of this norm which produced the chaos that was Gnostic teaching.⁸² Such a lack of agreement in Gnostic speculation contained a two-fold danger for the Church. Not only did it confuse and entice some orthodox Christians away from the true faith by means of its very novelty, but it proved a great embarrassment to the Church in its missionary efforts among the pagans. The Gnostics also claimed to be Christians and called themselves such, so that the pagan world could object "that they ought not to believe on account of the discord of the sects. For the truth is warped when some teach one set of doctrines, others another."⁸³ To overcome this danger, the Church

⁸¹ "Si autem et Dominum per phantasmata huiusmodi fecisse dicunt, ad prophetica reducentes eos, ex ipsis demonstrabimus, omnia sic de eo et praedicta esse, et facta firmissime." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:32:4. For the Greek original of this passage, cf. Eusebius, H.E. V:7:3. Cf. also Adv. Haer., IV:23:1 and 26:1.

⁸² Cf. Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, pp. 70-72.

⁸³ Clem. Alex., Strom., VII:15. μή δεῖν πιστεύειν διὰ τὴν διαφωνίαν τῶν αἱρέσεων· παρατείνει γὰρ καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια, ἄλλων ἄλλα δογματιζόντων.

established a closed canon of Scripture as the norm from which its doctrine was to be derived.

From the very first, of course, appeal had been made to the Old Testament, to the words of the Lord, and to the Apostles' doctrine for authority in any dispute.⁸⁴ But with the rise of heresies there sprang up all sorts of false Gospels, Epistles, Acts, Apocalypses which contained fictitious deeds and sayings both of the Lord and of the Apostles. Thus the first duty of the Church was to establish a canon of true Scripture. In this, orthodox Christendom acted with great deliberation, so that it was not until the fifth century that the canon was finally established,⁸⁵ but long before then, by the time of Irenaeus, the Church had abjured nearly all the apocryphal and Gnostic writings and the general consensus gave canonicity to practically the same books as we have in our Bibles to-day. Once the canon was settled, it was possible to use the Scripture as the norm of doctrine. As Irenaeus writes:

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures,

⁸⁴ Cf. the Pastoral Epistles, the Epistles of John, Jude, I Clement 7ff.; Polycarp, Ad Phil., 6f.; Justin Martyr, Apol., I; Dial. c. Trypho; etc. Also Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 23.

⁸⁵ Even this date must be given with reservation, as ecumenical sanction was not given to the final list until the Quinisextine Council of 692 A.D. Cf. W. Sanday, "Bible", HERE, vol. 2, p. 576.

to be the ground and pillar of
our faith.⁸⁶

From the Scriptures came not only the proof of orthodox doctrine,⁸⁷ but the means of refuting heresy: "Remember, therefore, my beloved friend, that . . . availing thyself also of these proofs drawn from Scripture - thou dost easily overthrow, as I have pointed out, all those notions of the heretics which were concocted afterwards."⁸⁸ In the East, Clement of Alexandria adopted the same stand in regard to the Bible: "But those who are ready to toil in the most excellent pursuits, will not desist from the search after truth, till they get the demonstration from the Scriptures themselves."⁸⁹

Establishing the Scriptures as the norm of doctrine, however, brought with it another difficulty - the

⁸⁶ "Non enim per alios dispositionem salutis nostrae cognovimus, quam per eos, per quos Evangelium pervenit ad nos: quod quidem tunc praeconaverunt, postea vero per Dei voluntatem in Scripturis nobis tradiderunt, fundamentum et columnam fidei nostrae futurum." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:1:1.

⁸⁷ ". . . ex Scripturis divinis probationes apponemus in medio omnibus amantibus veritatem." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:35:4. Cf. III:5:1; 12:9; 21:3; IV:35:4; V:5:1; 20:2.

⁸⁸ "Memor igitur, dilectissime . . . utens etiam his ostensionibus, quae sunt ex scripturis, facile evertis, quemadmodum demonstravimus, omnes eas, quae postea affictae sunt, haereticorum sententias." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., V:14:4. Cf. V:21:2.

⁸⁹ Clem. Alex., Strom., VII:16. Cf. VII:15.
Ἄλλ' οἱ πονεῖν ἔτοιμοι ἐπὶ τοῖς καλλίστοις οὐ πρότερον
ἀποστήσονται ζητοῦντες τὴν ἀλήθειαν, πρὶν ἂν τὴν
ἀπόδειξιν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λάβωσι τῶν Γραφῶν.

On the use of Scripture by other post-apostolic writers, cf. Hagenbach, A History of Christian Doctrines, vol. I, pp. 114ff.

problem of interpretation. The Gnostics used Scriptural passages freely to buttress their teaching and claimed to be the only ones who understood the real meaning behind the written word. Their method of exegesis was largely allegorical, so their favourite passages were the parables and prophetic sections which could be adapted more easily to their particular use. They also found much useful material in the Pentateuch which abounded in numbers and which could be made to reveal all sorts of cryptic doctrines.⁹⁰ When it suited their purpose, the Gnostics were not even averse to tampering with the text, thus altering the meaning completely.⁹¹ "Then, again, collecting a set of expressions and names scattered here and there [in Scripture], they twist them, as we have already said, from a natural to an unnatural sense."⁹²

While it was evident to every orthodox churchman that this method of handling Holy Writ was wrong, it was difficult to attack it, because the allegorical method of exegesis had been the approved one in the Church almost from the beginning. It was evident that a more accurate rule of Scriptural interpretation would have to be

⁹⁰ Another link between Gnosticism and the East where numerology and astrology reached their greatest development.

⁹¹ Cf. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:3:6; 8:1; II:10:1f.; V:21:2. One of the best analyses of Gnostic perversion of the Scriptures is found in Clem. Alex., Strom., VII:16.

⁹² Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:9:4. Ἐπειτα λέξεις καὶ ὀνόματα σποράδην κείμενα συλλέγοντες, μεταφέρουσι, καθὼς προειρήκαμεν, ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν εἰς τὸ παρὰ φύσιν.
Cf. I:18-20.

evolved. Even Irenaeus was not free from the use of allegory. He often refers to types, antitypes, prefigurements, cryptic meanings, etc.⁹³ Tertullian attempted to resolve the difficulty by denying the heretics the right to use Scripture at all:

Accordingly, we oppose to them this step above all others, of not admitting them to any discussion of the Scriptures. If in these lie their resources, before they can use them, it ought to be clearly seen to whom belongs the possession of the Scriptures, that none may be admitted to the use thereof who has no title at all to the privilege.⁹⁴

This, however, was no permanent solution, as Irenaeus was one of the first to see. Accordingly, he set about to create a more satisfactory rule for Scriptural exegesis. In the first place, he insisted "that proofs contained in the Scriptures cannot be shown except from the Scriptures themselves."⁹⁵ For, as Clement put it, "The truth is not found by changing the meanings (for so people pervert all true teaching), but . . . in establishing each one of the points demonstrated in the

⁹³ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:19-21; 22:2; 23:1; 25; 30:4; 31:1; 36:2; V:8:3f.; 29:2; 33:3; etc.

⁹⁴ "Hunc igitur potissimum gradum obstruimus, non admittendos eos ad ullam de scripturis disputationem: si haec sunt illae vires eorum, uti eas habere possint. Dispicitur debet cui competat possessio scripturarum; ne is admittatur ad eas, cui nullo modo competit." Tertullian, De praescrip. haer., 15. Cf. 16-19, 37.

⁹⁵ "Hoc intelligens quoniam ostensiones, quae sunt in Scripturis, non possunt ostendi, nisi ex ipsis Scripturis." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:12:9.

Scriptures again from similar Scriptures."⁹⁶ In other words, the Bible must be allowed to speak for itself and must not be forced into preconceived thought patterns created by the exegete.

In the second place, Irenaeus anticipated the wording of the Westminster Confession⁹⁷ when he averred that difficult passages of Scripture should be explained by passages the meaning of which was clear. When the Gnostics used ambiguous passages of Scripture to postulate an hypothetical God above the "creator god", Irenaeus objected:

For no question can be solved by means of another which itself awaits solution; nor in the opinion of those possessed of sense, can an ambiguity be explained by means of another ambiguity, or enigmas by means of another greater enigma, but things of such character receive their solution from those which are manifest, and consistent, and clear.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Clem. Alex., Strom., VII:16. 'Η ἀλήθεια δὲ οὐκ ἐν τῷ μετατιθέναι τὰ σημαινόμενα εὐρίσκεται· (οὕτω μὲν γὰρ ἀνατρέψουσιν πᾶσαν ἀληθῆ διδασκαλίαν) ἀλλ' ἐν . . . τῷ βεβαιοῦν ἕκαστον τῶν ἀποδεικνυμένων κατὰ τὰς Γραφὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν πάλιν τῶν ὁμοίων Γραφῶν.
cf. VII:15 also in this connection.

⁹⁷ "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1647, I:9.

⁹⁸ "Omnis autem quaestio non per aliud, quod quaeritur, habebit resolutionem, nec ambiguitas per aliam ambiguitatem solvetur apud eos, qui sensum habent, aut aenigmata per aliud majus aenigma, sed ea quae sunt talia, ex manifestis, et consonantibus, et claris accipiunt absolutiones." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:10:1. Cf. 27:1.

Finally, Irenaeus suggested a three-fold test which foreshadowed the textual criticism of the nineteenth century. An approved text should be upheld by the best manuscript evidence; it should be authenticated, if possible, by contemporary witnesses; and it should be both intelligible and reasonable.⁹⁹ It must be admitted that the Gnostics were probably the first ones to handle the Biblical text critically,¹⁰⁰ even though their results were marred by the preconceptions with which they approached their task. But while the orthodox were shocked at first, they were forced as a result to abandon their current allegorical method of exegesis.

Irenaeus was fully aware of the dangers inherent in translation and in the scribal errors of the copyist. He had seen too many corrupt texts and witnessed the harm they could do at the hands of the Gnostics. That is why, for instance, he takes such pains to establish the reliability of the Septuagint.¹⁰¹ It is why, also, he appends that stern order at the end of one of his books:

⁹⁹ Applying this test to a specific textual problem, Irenaeus writes: "His autem sic se habentibus, et in omnibus antiquis et probatissimis et veteribus scripturis numero hoc posito, et testimonium perhibentibus his, qui facie ad faciem Johannem viderunt, et ratione docente nos. . . ." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., V:30:1. For the Greek original of this passage, vide Eusebius, H.E., V:8:5. Cf. also V:20:6 with reference to eye-witnesses.

¹⁰⁰ Eusebius has given us an account of the exegetical methods of the Theodotians: H.E., V:28:13ff. Cf. McGiffert's notes on this passage.

¹⁰¹ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:21:3.

I adjure thee who mayest copy this book, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by His glorious advent when He comes to judge the living and the dead, to compare what thou shalt write, and correct it carefully by this manuscript, and also write this adjuration, and place it in the copy.¹⁰²

Once having defined the limits of the canon, and having established the integrity of his text, Irenaeus is fully armed to wage war on his Gnostic adversaries for their misuse of Scripture. He charges the Gnostics with disregarding the context of their proof texts,¹⁰³ of using allegory illegitimately,¹⁰⁴ of using enigmatic passages to support unscriptural hypotheses,¹⁰⁵ and of arbitrary dissection of the Bible.¹⁰⁶ "For what [sort of conduct] would it be," he concludes, "were we to forsake the utterances of the prophets, of the Lord, and of the Apostles, that we might give heed to these persons, who

¹⁰² Irenaeus, De ogdoade apud Eusebius, H.E., V:20:2.
 ὀρκίζω σε τὸν μεταγραφόμενον τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτο κατὰ
 τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ κατὰ τῆς ἐνδόξου
 παρουσίας αὐτοῦ, ἧς ἔρχεται κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς,
 ἵνα ἀντιβάλης ὁ μετεγράψω, καὶ κατορθώσης αὐτὸ πρὸς
 τὸ ἀντίγραφον τοῦτο ὅθεν μετεγράψω, ἐπιμελῶς· καὶ
 τὸν ὅρκον τοῦτον ὁμοίως μεταγράψεις καὶ θήσεις ἐν
 τῷ ἀντιγράφῳ.

¹⁰³ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:8:1; 9:4.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., I:3; II:20:1ff.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., II:10:1f.; 27:1ff.

¹⁰⁶ Particularly the Gnostic claim that the Old Testament was not inspired by the same Spirit as the New Testament. Cf. Adv. Haer., IV:15; 9:1; III:21:4.

speak not a word of sense?"¹⁰⁷

Irenaeus put his finger on one of the most subtle distinctions between the Gnostic and the Orthodox approach to the Scriptures when he asserted that "no man is capable of knowing God unless he be taught of God; that is, that God cannot be known without God."¹⁰⁸ The Gnostics took the view that God was essentially a deus incognitus who had no wish to reveal Himself except in riddles. Whatever knowledge of the deity man was able to attain must be gained at the price of great mental effort, as though humanity stole from a reluctant God the secret of His existence. This, in the view of the Church, was blasphemy. No man by the power of his intellect alone can, as it were, find out God unawares. Left to his own resources, man would be powerless to pierce the divine mystery. But God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, a free self-revelation which comes to us by the Holy Spirit and the Sacred Scriptures. It is from the standpoint of faith, declared the Church, and no other that the Bible should be approached.¹⁰⁹

Because the Scriptures contain the revelation of God, they must be considered as complete and sufficient for man's salvation. Therefore, many of the questions

¹⁰⁷ "Quale enim est, prophetarum, et Domini, et apostolorum relinquentes nos voces, attendere his, nihil sani dicentibus?" Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:2:6.

¹⁰⁸ "Deum scire nemo potest, nisi Deo docente, hoc est, sine Deo non cognosci Deum." Adv. Haer., IV:6:4.

¹⁰⁹ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:33:7f.; II:35:4f.

raised by the Gnostics which find no clear answer in Scripture should not even be raised. As Irenaeus put it:

If we cannot, however, discover explanations of all those things in Scripture which are made the subject of investigation, yet let us not on that account seek after any other God besides Him who really exists. . . . We should leave things of that nature to God who created us, being most properly assured that the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit.¹¹⁰

To persist in the attempt to go beyond God's self-revelation was to run the risk of losing what man had already gained.¹¹¹

The Gnostics, for the most part, justified their arbitrary use of Scripture on the basis of their own belief in the secret transmission of doctrine. The Lord, they asserted, had taught the people the obvious truths which subsequently became the Catholic faith; but in private, He had divulged to His disciples deeper truths and meanings in His teaching than the common people were able to understand. It was this esoteric teaching which the Gnostics claimed to possess. "For the gnosis itself is that which has descended by transmission to a few, having been

¹¹⁰ "Si autem omnium, quae in Scripturis requiruntur, absolutiones non possumus invenire, alterum tamen Deum, praeter eum qui est, non requiramus. . . . Cedere autem haec talia debemus Deo, qui et nos fecit, rectissime scientes, quia Scripturae quidem perfectae sunt, quippe a Verbo Dei et Spiritu ejus dictae." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:28:2.

¹¹¹ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:28:1. Cf. Tertullian, De praescip. haer., XIV.

imparted unwritten by the Apostles."¹¹² Insofar as this so-called secret teaching of the Lord differed from the teaching of the Church, it was vigorously opposed by all orthodox churchmen. Irenaeus angrily declares, "The doctrine of the Apostles is open and steadfast, holding nothing in reserve; nor did they teach one set of doctrines in private, and another in public."¹¹³

As if in proof of this, the Church compared its own doctrine as it was taught all around the Mediterranean world with the teaching of the Gnostics. Hegesippus, who wrote about the same time as did Irenaeus, took a journey to Rome in the course of which he interviewed a great many bishops and received the same doctrine from all of them.¹¹⁴ With Irenaeus himself, the unity of the Church's faith is a favourite theme. Nowhere does he wax more eloquent, nowhere is there a greater note of triumphant pride in his writings than when he extols the "one cohort

¹¹² Clem. Alex., Strom., VI:7. Ἡ γνώσις δὲ αὐτῇ ἡ κατὰ διὰδοχὰς εἰς ὀλίγους ἐκ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀγράφως παραδοθεῖσα, κατελήλυθεν.

It is curious to find this Gnostic tenet stated by Clement as part of his own credo. Clement, however, unlike the other Gnostics, maintained that this secret transmission was never contrary to ecclesiastical orthodoxy or apostolic tradition as handed down by the Catholic Church. Cf. Strom., VII:16.

¹¹³ "Doctrina apostolorum manifesta, et firma et nihil subtrahens, neque alia quidem in abscondito, alia vero in manifesto docentium." Adv. Haer., III:15:1.

¹¹⁴ Hegesippus apud Eusebius, H.E., IV:22:1. Cf. IV:8:2 and 22:5 with McGiffert's notes in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, esp. p. 198. Another interesting record of a widely-travelled bishop comes from the epitaph of Abercius, bishop of Hierapolis, who lived in the time of Marcus Aurelius and L. Verus. Cf. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, Part II, vol. I, p. 496.

of faith."¹¹⁵ For, as he observes in a lengthy passage:

The Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points just as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For the churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down anything different, nor do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Libya, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world [Palestine?]. But, as the sun, that creature of God, is one and the same throughout the whole world, so also the preaching of the truth shineth everywhere, and enlightens all men that are willing to come to a knowledge of the truth. Nor will any one of the rulers in the churches, however highly gifted he may be in the point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the Master); nor, on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on the tradition. For the faith being one and the same, neither does one who is able at any great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one, who can say but little, diminish it.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ "unam cohortem fidei." Adv. Haer., IV:21:3.

¹¹⁶ "Hanc praedicationem cum acceperit, et hanc fidem . . . Ecclesia, et quidem in universum mundum disseminata, diligenter custodit, quasi unam domum inhabitans: et similiter credit iis, videlicet quasi unam

It was this faith - universal and continuous - which provided the rallying point of the Church.¹¹⁷ As opposed to it, the Gnostics could show only a wild profusion of sects and teachings. Each Gnostic leader developed his own system and created a new school of thought so that there was a vast amount of disagreement among these "wise Christians." Harnack has pointed out that this disagreement never produced conflict among the Gnostic schools, but that, on the contrary, such cordial relations existed among them that various schools often exchanged books of doctrine for their mutual edification.¹¹⁸ This can only mean that doctrine was not the most important issue with them. It was the frame of mind, the attitude with which

116 (cont.) animam habens, et unam cor, et consonanter haec praedicat, et docet, et tradit, quasi unum possidens os. Nam etsi in mundo loquelae dissimiles sunt, sed tamen virtus traditionis una et eadem est. Et neque hae quae in Germania sunt fundatae Ecclesiae aliter credunt, aut aliter tradunt; neque hae quae in Hiberis sunt, neque hae quae in Celtis, neque hae quae in Oriente, neque hae quae in Aegypto, neque hae quae in Libya, neque hae quae in medio mundi constitutae: sed sicut sol, creatura Dei, in universo mundo unus et idem est, sic et lumen, praedictio veritatis, ubique lucet, et illuminat omnes homines, qui volunt et cognitionem veritatis venire. Et neque is qui valde praevalet in sermone, ex iis qui praesunt Ecclesiis, alia, quam haec sunt, dicet (nemo enim super magistrum est): neque infirmus in dicendo deminorabit traditionem. Cum enim una et eadem fides sit, neque is qui multum de ea potest dicere, ampliat, neque is qui minus, deminorat." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:10:2. For the Greek original of this passage, vide Migne, Patrologia Graeca, vol. VII, col. 552f. Cf. also Adv. Haer., I:10:3; 13:4; II:9:1; III:12:12.

117 Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., I:10:1; IV:33:3; 35:4; V:20:1.

118 Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. I, p. 234.

study was undertaken that they emphasized, Not the results but the quest was the central factor. How different was the standpoint of the Church which found its vitality and very life in an unaltered faith "as if it were some precious deposit in an excellent vessel renewing its youth, it causes the vessel itself containing it to renew its youth also."¹¹⁹

Tertullian regarded all the orthodox churches of the world as "primitive", that is, as founded by the Apostles. For their doctrine was all one, and so though, they may have come into being quite late, their spiritual ancestry was apostolic.¹²⁰ This distinction was most important for the Church, because it provided another criterion as to what constituted true doctrine. Though doctrine had to agree with the Scriptures and in that sense might be said to depend upon them, the canons of Scriptural exegesis were not yet sufficiently formed. Hence, the Church taught, further, that the Scriptures must be explained in accordance with the tradition handed down from the Apostles.¹²¹

The faith, then, was regarded as a corpus of doctrines which relied for its authentication on Scripture

¹¹⁹ ". . . quasi in vase bono eximium quoddam depositum juvenescens, et juvenescere faciens ipsum vas in quo est." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:24:1.

¹²⁰ "Itaque tot ac tantae Ecclesiae, una est illa ab apostolis prima, ex qua omnes. Sic omnes prima, et apostolicae, dum una omnes probant unitatem." Tertullian, De praescrip. haer., 20. Cf. 21, 28, 32.

¹²¹ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:4:1; I:9:4; 22:1.

interpreted in line with the tradition of the Church. Each Church teacher harked back to apostolic precedent to give authority to his teaching. Speaking of his own masters (probably Tatian, Theodotus, and Pantaeus), Clement of Alexandria writes:

So they preserving the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy Apostles, Peter, James, John, and Paul, the son receiving it from the father . . . came by God's will to us also to deposit those ancestral seeds.¹²²

Origen took refuge from the not infrequent charge of heresy by asserting the authority of tradition in establishing doctrine.¹²³

Irenaeus stood in an unusually close relation to the Church tradition. He recalled as a boy listening to the recollections of the aged Polycarp, who in turn had been a follower of John, the disciple of the Lord.¹²⁴ This apostolic teaching was carefully memorized, often

¹²² Clem. Alex., Strom., I:1. Ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν τὴν ἀληθῆ τῆς μακαρίας σωζόντες διδασκαλίας παράδοσιν, εὐθὺς ἀπὸ Πέτρου τε καὶ Ἰακώβου, Ἰωάννου τε καὶ Παύλου, τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων, παῖς. παρὰ πατρός ἐκδεχόμενος . . . ἤκον δὴ σὺν Θεῷ καὶ εἰς ἡμᾶς τὰ προγονικὰ ἐκεῖνα καὶ ἀποστολικὰ καταθησόμενοι σπέρματα.
Cf. also VII:17.

¹²³ "Ita cum multi sint qui se putant sentire quae Christi sunt, et nonnulli eorum diversa a prioribus sentiant, servetur vero ecclesiastica praedicatio per successionis ordinem ab apostolis tradita, et usque ad praesens in Ecclesiis permanens: illa sola credendi est veritas, quae in nullo ab ecclesiastica et apostolica discordat traditione." Origen, De Principiis, I:praef.:2.

verbatim; it was treasured within the Church, and passed down to each succeeding generation along with the list of those through whom it had come. By means of this oral tradition, even illiterate Christians could receive the faith in its purity and entirety.¹²⁵ Further, because of it, all Christians were not left to the mercy of every new "teacher" of Christian truth.¹²⁶ As new congregations were founded, springing up all over the Roman Empire, they received the "seeds of doctrine" from the parent churches, according to Tertullian, and it was the possession of this traditional doctrine which made each new congregation a true church.¹²⁷

Gradually, however, the tradition became standardized in two different ways. A number of orthodox Church writers put the tradition down in writing thus making it available to all the churches in a set pattern,¹²⁸ and in addition the faith was embodied in creeds. The latter existed in some form or other right back to the earliest years of the Church. But they were not the stiff, unalterable formulae that they are today. Rather, they were

¹²⁴ Cf. Irenaeus, Epistle to Florinus apud Eusebius, H.E., V:20:6.

¹²⁵ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:4:2. Cf. 4:1; 12:7; 24:1.

¹²⁶ Ibid., I:10:2; III:2:2; 3:1,4; IV:33:7f.; V:20:1; Eusebius, H.E., IV:14:4.

¹²⁷ "Proinde Ecclesias apud unamquamque civitatem condiderunt, a quibus traducem fidei et semina doctrinae, caeterae exinde Ecclesiae mutuatae sunt, et quotidie mutantur ut Ecclesiae fiant." Tertullian, De praescrip. haer., 20. Cf. 21.

¹²⁸ Cf. Eusebius, H.E., IV:21:1.

fluid expressions of belief which varied in phraseology from church to church. As Lietzmann has pointed out, in the entire ancient Church, no two writers ever quote exactly the same creed.¹²⁹

Despite this variety of expression, there is a fairly consistent body of doctrines contained in these formulae, which gives us a good idea of what were the crucial tenets of the Church's faith. This unanimity of content was further strengthened under the impact of heresy, because each church was forced to examine its creed critically and see that the words conveyed the exact meaning intended. So even before the great councils met to draft definitive formulae, the process of crystallization was far advanced. "The Church," wrote Harnack, "became a union based on the true doctrine and visible in it; and this confederation was at the same time enabled to realize an actual outward unity by means of the apostolic inheritance, the doctrinal confession, and the apostolic writings."¹³⁰

Even this was not enough. Though true doctrine was the chief unitive factor in the Church based as it was on Scripture and interpreted by apostolic tradition, the

¹²⁹ Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, pp. 148f. Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 27: "The persuasive power with which Irenaeus set up the principle of the apostolic 'rule of truth', or of 'tradition' or simply of 'faith', was undoubtedly, as far as himself was concerned, based on the fact that he had already a rigidly formulated creed before him and that he had no doubt as to its interpretation."

¹³⁰ Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 74.

Gnostics could and did claim a certain tradition behind them. To prove that the doctrine of the Church alone was true, Irenaeus pointed to the apostolic succession. It was the thesis of the Church that doctrine had come down unchanged from Christ and the Apostles through an orderly succession of bishops. The bishop was the living guardian of doctrine, and it was his duty to preserve the *παράδοσις* unaltered, not only for his contemporaries but for the sake of future generations as well.¹³¹ Each see maintained a careful list of the bishops who had occupied its episcopal chair. Naturally, however, the churches which could boast of having been founded by an Apostle had a certain priority among their fellows. For this reason, Irenaeus, writing in the West, logically turned to Rome as the best example of the apostolic succession. He listed the Roman bishops from the time of the church's origin and then concluded:

In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the Apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the Apostles until now, and handed down in truth.¹³²

¹³¹ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:2:2; IV:33:7. Cf. Tertullian, De praescrip. haer., 20, 21, 32.

¹³² "Hac ordinatione et successione, ea quae est ab apostolis in Ecclesia traditio et veritatis praeconatio pervenit usque ad nos. Et est plenissima haec ostensio, unam et eandem vivificatricem fidem esse, quae in Ecclesia ab apostolis usque nunc sit conservata, et tradita in veritate." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:3:3. Cf. III:praef.; 3:1f.; IV:26:2,4,5.

Not only did the apostolic succession preserve the historical continuity of doctrine, but, as Harnack has shown, it was supplemented by the dogmatic assertion that the bishop received "cum episcopatus successione charisma veritatis certum."¹³³ Thus the true doctrine was infallibly preserved by the apostolic truth which was the objective charisma attached to the episcopal office.

Such logical demonstration of the orthodox position as given by Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others was not without effect. In the last analysis, the Gnostics were forced to abandon both Scripture and tradition as the ultimate norm of truth.¹³⁴ All that was left them was the exceedingly shaky foundation of their own speculative thought. Clement of Alexandria remarks rather pointedly that only to those who show themselves worthy of knowledge is it entrusted.¹³⁵ Irenaeus demonstrated the antithetical nature of Christ's teaching as compared to the teaching of the Greek philosophers, implying that the two cannot be reconciled, as the Gnostics were attempting to do. Then he asks whether or not the Greek thinkers knew the truth; if

¹³³ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:26:2. Cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 69.

¹³⁴ "Evenit itaque, neque Scripturis jam, neque Traditioni consentire eos." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:2:2. Cf. 2:1; IV:35:4; V:20:1; Tertullian, De praescrip. haer., 42; Eusebius, H.E., V:28:16ff.

¹³⁵ Clem. Alex., Strom., VII:10. ἡ γνῶσις δὲ ἐκ παραδόσεως διαδιδόμενη κατὰ χάριν Θεοῦ, τοὺς ἀξίους σφραγίσαντος τῆς διδασκαλίας παρεχομένου οἷον παρακαταθήκη ἐκχειρίζεται.

they did, then the Incarnation was unnecessary, and it would be wrong to seek the truth in Christ; if they did not, then why did the Gnostics who claimed to be the sole possessors of truth express themselves in the same terms as the Greeks?¹³⁶

In the eyes of the good Bishop of Lyons, this completed the argument of the Church against the Gnostics, and he rested his case. It has been the judgment of subsequent ages¹³⁷ that he performed the rôle of prosecuting attorney extraordinarily well. At least it is instructive to note that when Cyprian wrote, only seventy years later, he scarcely mentions the Gnostic heresy, so rapidly had it declined in influence.¹³⁸ This did not mean that the task was over once Gnosticism was refuted. The faithful had to be cautioned continually against heeding the heretics. In a notable passage Irenaeus pleads with all Christians to

Hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever, either as heretics of perverse minds, or as schismatics puffed up and self-pleasing, or again as hypocrites, acting thus for the sake of lucre and vainglory. For all these have fallen from the truth.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., II:14:7.

¹³⁷ Harnack notwithstanding! History of Dogma, vol. I, chap. IV.

¹³⁸ Cf. Eusebius, H.E., IV:7.

¹³⁹ "reliquos vero, qui absistunt a principali successione, et quocunque loco colligunt, suspectos habere, vel quasi haereticos, et malae sententiae; vel quasi scindentes, et elatos, et sibi placentes; aut rursus ut

Finally, he appealed to the dissatisfied brethren in the Church to avoid schism in any form. "For nothing they [the schismatics] do can make so great an improvement as will equal the disaster of schism."¹⁴⁰ There can be no doubt that it was a deep yearning for unity which prompted Irenaeus' savage outbursts against those who would destroy it. He saw with almost prophetic vision that in doctrine the Church could attain both cohesion and liberty, both unity and freedom. That his great dream was never quite realized is the fault of lesser minds than his in his own and subsequent ages. Prophets may point the way with transparent clarity, but it does not always follow that the rest of mankind will heed their call.

¹³⁹(cont.) "hypocritas, quaestus gratia et vanae gloriae hoc operantes. Omnes autem hi deciderunt a veritate." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:26:2. Cf. Eusebius, H.E., IV:24:2.

¹⁴⁰ "Nulla enim ab eis tanta potest fieri correctio, quanta est schismatis pernicies." Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., IV:33:7.

Chapter V

PRIESTHOOD AND EPISCOPATE

"Unde scire debes episcopum in ecclesia
esse et ecclesiam in episcopo et si
qui cum episcopo non sit in ecclesia
non esse."¹

While the Church, in the time of Irenaeus, was conscious of being a unity, this did not imply the presence of a mechanical bond which held the whole body together. Rather, it resembled a loose confederation of believers whose chief connection lay in the fact that they believed and taught the same thing. There was, as yet, no written constitution or common set of laws,² and wide diversity of custom and practice existed throughout the ecumenical Church. But despite rudimentary communication and lack of central organization, the unity was there. Christians who travelled far from home felt it in the hospitality that was extended to them wherever they encountered a Christian community; the depressed classes were made aware of it through the universal scope of Christian charity; and even the pagans sensed it when bishops gathered in councils and synods to deliberate on common problems. The charge that the Church had become an imperium in imperio was not without considerable justification.

Such a unity as this, however, was not sufficient to meet the sectarian challenge within the Church. The

¹ Cyprian, Ep. 66:8. Cf. infra, p. 239, footnote 128.

² On this vide Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 483f.

Montanist struggle convinced the Church that controls would have to be imposed on prophetic utterance and that the ministry would henceforth have to be subject to some sort of hierarchical government.³ Irenaeus had hoped that the challenge could be met by doctrine, but even this did not prove sufficient. The interpretation of doctrine proved a fertile field for controversy, and even an appeal to tradition failed to bring unanimity of acceptance. Particularly was it difficult to reach agreement on the application of doctrine to contemporary problems. What was needed was a living authority who could adjudicate between rival theories and hand down a decision that was final.⁴ In other words, what the times demanded was an ecclesiastical referee about whose deliverances there could be no ambiguity or question. It was not necessary to create a new officer to fill this function; there was one already in existence with almost a century of history behind him - the monarchical bishop.

Ever since Jesus "appointed twelve to be with Him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons,"⁵ there was divine precedent for such leadership. Did not Jesus say to the disciples, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives Him who sent me."⁶ Did He not give Peter, on behalf of the

³ Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, p. 437.

⁴ Ibid., p. 223.

⁵ Mark 3:14f. Cf. Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 6:7; Luke 6:13-16; 9:1ff.

⁶ Matt. 10:40. Cf. variant in Luke 9:47f.

disciples, the keys of the Kingdom and the power of binding and loosing?⁷ Were not the disciples made judges in Israel?⁸ Surely such words as these could not but place any apostolic decision outside the realm of debate or cavil.⁹ After Pentecost the Twelve were not slow to exercise their authority. Both John¹⁰ and Jude¹¹ attacked those who dared question the apostolic rule whether it was exercised directly or by delegated leaders.

During the first decades of the Church's existence, monarchical authority was neither present nor necessary in the Church. The enthusiastic spreading of the Gospel, the unconscious creating of tradition, and above all the belief in an imminent parousia kept Church organization in a primitive state. It was only when tradition began to harden and the heresies put the Church on the defensive that serious consideration was given to the authority of the presbyters and bishops. The unity of the Church, which heretofore had been taken for granted, was now seen to be essential to the Church's life and therefore to be preserved at all costs. No better means both of defending and of giving expression to this unity could be adduced

⁷ Matt. 16:17-20; 18:18-21. If in the former passage Christ addressed Peter alone, there can be little doubt that He spoke to all the disciples in the latter. Cf. Luke 12:32.

⁸ Luke 22:28-30.

⁹ It was only because Paul claimed apostolic authority himself that he dared challenge the decision of Peter and the other Apostles. Cf. Gal. 1:1; 2:11.

¹⁰ III John 9f. Cf. II Peter 2:9f.

¹¹ Jude 8, 10.

than the episcopate. "In the bishop was found the visible representative of Christ, the great Head of the whole Church."¹²

The conditions of the late second century were forcing the Church toward some measure of uniformity. Aside from the practical advantages accruing from set forms of worship and common marriage and divorce laws, the sectarian and heretical elements on the fringe of the Church made disciplinary control a necessity. As Duchesne has pointed out, it is not mere coincidence that our earliest documents on heresy also contain the record of progress in ecclesiastical organization.¹³ Further, the example of the Roman State advertised the advantages of uniformity, while the persecutions instituted by the State compelled the Church to take united action in order to survive.¹⁴

Meanwhile, there was a drastic change in the conception of the Church. Whereas in the apostolic period it was a "brotherhood of the saints," and was defined largely by the manner of life led by its adherents, it came to be regarded as a community under the rule of a bishop and was defined by its manner of government. The universal

¹² Schaff, History of the Church, vol. II, p. 143. Cf. further sec. 53 "The Catholic Unity", pp. 168ff.

¹³ Duchesne, Early History of the Christian Church, vol. I, p. 63.

¹⁴ Cf. A.C. Headlam, The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion, pp. 122f.

Church was no longer the world-wide fellowship of all who followed and confessed Jesus as Lord; rather, it was a federation of local churches, each one of which held the same rule of faith and was governed by a bishop who stood in the apostolic succession.¹⁵ As Bishop Gore put it, "The primary conception of her unity becomes that of unity of government [*italics his*]. . . the dominant idea becomes that of government."¹⁶

Such a profound change could not fail to have a lasting effect on the Church's life. After prophetism was repudiated as a result of the Montanist controversy, one of the last links with the apostolic age was severed. Henceforth, the distinction between that first century, the Golden Age of the Church, and all subsequent ages was drawn wide and deep. Both legend and idealistic imagination combined to make of the early Church "a pure and uncorrupted virgin."¹⁷ After the Spirit ceased speaking through living mouths and God's presence could be assured only through form and ritual, but one connection remained with that distant, happy era - the regular ministry of the Church, especially the bishop. By means of the apostolic succession, the episcopate could claim a direct link with

¹⁵ Cf. T.M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, p. 226.

¹⁶ Gore, The Church and the Ministry, pp. 50f.

¹⁷ παρθένος καθαρὰ καὶ ἁδιάφθορος Hegesippus
apud Eusebius, H.E., III:32:7. Cf. the rest of the passage.

the Apostles and through them with the Lord. Here was the one power that could bring an absent King back to bless His Church.¹⁸

It must not be thought that this was the theory of the third century Church. Thus far it was only the practice. It was not until later that theory justified what practice had made traditional. As Harnack has pointed out, the idea of the Church is always a stage behind the current practice so that "it was only with slowness and hesitation that the theories of the Church followed the actual changes in her history."¹⁹

By the time of Cyprian, then, the bishop became not only the symbol of the Church's unity but the means of expressing it. How did this condition arise? The answer, as we have seen, lies partly in the external and internal forces which moulded the Church into what she was; and partly, it was the result of the change in the nature of the episcopate itself.²⁰ Though there is still some doubt

¹⁸ H.M. Gwatkin, Early Church History to A.D. 313, pp. 93-96.

¹⁹ Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 72. Cf. pp. 83f.

²⁰ Few subjects have provided so much debate in recent years as the question of the Christian Ministry. Between Anglicans and Nonconformist writers, especially, the battle has raged with undiminished ardour. Good introductions to the problems involved are given by H.M. Gwatkin, "Bishop and Elder", HDB, vol. I, pp. 301f.; A.J. Maclean, "Ministry (Early Christian)", HERE, vol. 7, pp. 659-674; and D. Stone, "Episcopacy", HERE, vol. 5, pp. 332-337. The last named article has a very good bibliography. For fuller treatment, cf. books by Hort, Gore, Hatch, Harnack, Lightfoot, Duchesne, Lindsay and others cited in this chapter.

as to the exact origin of the term ἐπίσκοπος,²¹ there is general agreement now that it was used synonymously with πρεσβύτερος in the New Testament.²² These terms had almost no priestly connotation outside the priesthood of all believers.²³ So it would appear that in the first few decades they were associated with purely administrative functions.

While it is true that presbyter and bishop were terms used interchangeably during the apostolic age, it is equally true that very early (between 110-120 A.D. at the latest) the presbyters were distinguished from the bishops and the episcopate became the highest office of the Church. In Rome when Clement wrote to the church at Corinth, presbyters and bishops were still synonymous,²⁴ and in other churches it would appear that the presbyters governed.²⁵ But a very few years later Ignatius was

²¹ For the pre-Christian usage of the term with possible derivations, cf. H.M. Gwatkin, "Bishop and Elder", HDB, vol. I, pp. 301f.

²² The only outstanding opponents of this view are Hort (The Christian Ecclesia, pp. 190-194) and Weizsäcker (Apostolic Age, vol. II, pp. 326-331). The evidence for synonymy of the terms rests with such passages as Acts 20:17,28; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-7; I Peter 5:1f.

²³ I Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. Cf. ἱερούργον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ in Rom. 15:16. Our Lord often is called "priest". Cf. Heb. 3:1; 5:5f.; 7:17,26; 10:21. Justin Martyr knows only a priesthood of all believers (Dial. c. Trypho, 116f.). Neither Clement of Rome, Ignatius, nor Irenaeus use priestly language of the Christian ministry. For the contrary evidence of the Didache and of Polycrates of Ephesus, vide A.J. Maclean, "Ministry (Early Christian)", HERE, vol. 8, p. 662.

²⁴ I Clement, 44.

²⁵ Polycarp, Phil., 5; Epiphanius, Panarion, 42:1.

writing of the "bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth,"²⁶ meanwhile making a clean distinction between "the bishop and the presbytery."²⁷

Clement of Alexandria speaks of John appointing bishops in Asia, indicating at the same time they were distinct from the presbytery.²⁸ Theodore of Mopsuestia, writing at the end of the fourth century, has given us the earliest account of what later came to be accepted as the orthodox view of the origin of the monarchical episcopate.²⁹ Though the details are historically unreliable, the antiquity of the episcopate is on firm ground. Perhaps even more important, however, is the evidence of the episcopal lists in Rome and other early sees.³⁰ Though there is some doubt as to the historical value of the earliest names, still the evidence they give for the origin of the monarchical bishop should not be underestimated.³¹

²⁶ Ignatius, Eph., 3. οἱ ἐπίσκοποι, οἱ κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὁρισθέντες.

²⁷ Ibid., 2. ὑποτασσόμενοι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ καὶ τῷ πρεσβυτέρῳ.

²⁸ Clem. Alex., Quis dives salvetur?, 42:2.

²⁹ Theo. Mop., Commentary on First Timothy, Harnack examines Theodore's statement and gives a careful criticism (The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 445ff.). Though Harnack rejects Theodore's explanation of the origin of the monarchical episcopate, he accepts an early date for its origin.

³⁰ Cf. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:3:4; Tertullian, Contra Marcionem, IV:5; Eusebius, H.E., IV:22f.

³¹ Cf. Lightfoot's intensive study on the "Early Roman Succession" in The Apostolic Fathers (1890), part I, vol. I, pp. 201-345 and McGiffert's note on the Roman succession in his edition of Eusebius, H.E., III:2. note #1. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 133.

While it is clear that the change from the apostolic presbyter-bishop took place with great rapidity, how it came about is still a mystery. The crucial few years during which the transformation occurred are almost barren of Christian documents. Further, there is absolutely no sign that the change produced any controversy or disagreement, a fact of the utmost historical significance. There have been a great many attempts to reconstruct from the few documents we possess exactly what took place. Two of these are worth attention here. B. H. Streeter in The Primitive Church³² faces the problem of the Didache versus the Epistles of Ignatius - documents written within a few years of one another and yet displaying an entirely different view of the ministry. The solution put forward is, briefly, as follows: The Didache was sent from a city church to outlying country churches in an effort to encourage the rural congregations to regularize their ministry and to emulate the more advanced conditions in the city. Thus, the ideal developed by the Didache already existed in the city of its origin. Then, the Epistles of Ignatius, while revealing an advanced stage in the development of the episcopate, also reveal (according to Streeter) that this development was of a very recent nature. For this reason, Ignatius has to defend the episcopal order with a vehemence which would otherwise be unnecessary.

³² Chapter V.

Another solution is proposed by T. M. Lindsay in his Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries.³³ He bridges the gap between the Didache and the Ignatian Epistles with that collection of early documents known as the Apostolic Canons.³⁴ Whereas the Didache reveals a very simple church organization with ultimate authority resident in the congregation,³⁵ and the presence of a charismatic or prophetic ministry,³⁶ the Canons presuppose a higher stage of development. The settled ministry consists of a pastor-bishop, presbyter-elders, and deacons; the bishop represents the congregation before the world and administers the sacraments, while the presbyters have charge of church discipline, even over the bishop.³⁷ The place of the prophet is taken by the Reader and the praying widows.³⁸ From this more advanced stage, it

³³ Chapter V. Cf. also Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire, pp. 361ff.

³⁴ To be distinguished from the Apostolic Constitutions. Harnack has edited the Canons with copious notes in Texte und Untersuchungen, vol. II, sec. 5. They have been translated into English by L. A. Wheatley under the title, Sources of the Apostolic Canons.

³⁵ The document is addressed to the congregation. They are urged to rule concerning the qualifications of visiting prophets (11,12); they are requested to appoint (ἡριπορονησάτε) their own regular ministry (15); and they are instructed how to administer their own sacraments (7-10). Cf. I Clement, praef. and 54:2.

³⁶ Didache, 10-13.

³⁷ Apostolic Canons, II:19,23. Lindsay takes προνοήσονται as implying the power of discipline from its use in describing the relation of the elders to the people. Lindsay, Op. cit., p. 180.

³⁸ Apostolic Canons, III; V.

is but a step to the episcopate as Ignatius understood it.

There is no necessity for choosing between the solutions of Canon Streeter and Professor Lindsay. Both agree on the essential point that the change took place as the result of expansion and establishment in a hostile pagan culture. In the Church of that early period we see a rapidly growing community which evoked the necessity of a more highly centralized organization; the larger the number, the greater the need for governing authority. Then another factor came into operation. With the rapid influx of converts came a large number who could not be retained if the Church demanded the high standards of the early Christian Ecclesia. Either the Church must make some accommodation to these less sanctified individuals, or it would remain a small "remnant" in a hostile world.³⁹ The former alternative was the Church's historic choice, and it was the episcopate which made the accommodation easy. Church membership became dependent on one's relation to the bishop rather than on relation to Jesus as evidenced by high personal morality.

This, of course, placed an enormous emphasis on the episcopate. But what happened in the event that an unworthy bishop came to occupy some see? Did his authority depend on his personal qualifications alone? By no means; another far more weighty support for his authority existed in the doctrine of the apostolic succession. Though there

³⁹ On this further, cf. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, p. 273.

seems to be no reference to this doctrine either in the New Testament, in the Didache, or in Ignatius,⁴⁰ it appears as far back as Clement of Rome.⁴¹ Hegesippus is the first extant writer to use the technical term "to succeed"⁴² or "succession".⁴³ The classic expression, however, of the idea of apostolic succession was given by Irenaeus,⁴⁴ who was followed by Tertullian⁴⁵ and all subsequent orthodox writers. The case has been put most succinctly by the Oxford scholar, C. H. Turner:

To belong to the succession, a bishop had first to be lawfully

⁴⁰ Such passages as II Tim. 2:2 refer to the transmission of the Gospel by teaching rather than the transmission of the apostolic charisma through the laying on of hands. On Ignatius, cf. C.H. Turner, "Apostolic Succession," in The Early History of the Church and the Ministry, p. 113.

⁴¹ I Clement, 40-42, 44. These passages, because of their ambiguous phraseology, have been hotly disputed. But there can be no reasonable doubt that they deal with the orderly succession of the ministry from the Apostles. Only the manner of the succession is debatable.

⁴² Hegesippus apud Eusebius, H.E., IV:22:3. Παρὰ Ἀνικλήτου διαδέχεται Σωτήρ.

⁴³ Ibid., IV:22:3. Ἐν ἑκάστη διαδοχῇ καὶ ἐν ἑκάστη πάλαι οὕτως ἔχει ὡς ὁ νόμος κηρύσσει καὶ ὁ προφητῆται καὶ ὁ Κύριος.
It is probable that the episcopal succession drawn up by Hegesippus was used by Epiphanius in Haer., 27:6.

⁴⁴ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:2:1 to 4:1; IV:26:2-5; 32:1 to 33:8.

⁴⁵ De praescrip. haer., and Adv. Marc., IV:5. For a fuller treatment of the historical evidences for apostolic succession, cf. Gore, The Church and the Ministry, chap. III and Gregory Dix, "The Ministry in the Early Church," chap. IV in The Apostolic Ministry.

chosen by a particular community to occupy the vacant cathedra of its church, and secondly to be lawfully entrusted with the charisma of the episcopate by the ministry of those already possessing it.⁴⁶

Such, then, was the theory behind the episcopate at the time of Irenaeus. Up to that time the theory was in the process of formation; after it, the theory hardened into tradition which was never challenged until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. The development of this theory and the rise of the monarchical episcopate would be fairly easy to trace were it not for one enigmatic figure whose letters have proved most difficult to fit into the historical background of his times: Ignatius, bishop of Antioch. Thanks to the monumental labours of Bishop Lightfoot, the textual problem has been largely settled. But the message of Ignatius is still disturbing. He appears at first sight to be a man born a century and a half before his time. His ideas on Church government, particularly, are more at home in the company of Cyprian than with Clement of Rome, Hermas, or the author of the Didache. Yet it is with the last three that, chronologically, he must be placed. As has been stated, there have been many theories put forward to resolve the anomaly and to interpret what the Syrian bishop really said. The latter is particularly important,

⁴⁶ C.H. Turner, "Apostolic Succession," in The Early History of the Church and the Ministry, p. 107.

because Ignatius' thought had a profound effect throughout the Church. In the history of the episcopate, at any rate, he stands as the fons et origo of the monarchical idea, which ultimately became the distinguishing feature of episcopal government.

For the purpose of the present investigation, two questions need to be answered: first, what was Ignatius' idea of the bishop? and second, what was his view of Church unity? To take the former question first, three points stand out: the function of the bishop, his place in Church government, and the nature of his office. According to Ignatius, the bishop had two functions. He was to maintain the order and discipline of the Church.⁴⁷ For this reason Ignatius never wearied in exhorting the churches to "Submit yourselves to the bishop,"⁴⁸ or "Do nothing without the bishop."⁴⁹ In union with the bishop there was strength and order. But the bishop had another function which may well have been more important than being a disciplinary officer. He was charged with the preservation and perpetuation of true doctrine. At the time Ignatius wrote, heresy was already rife, and there was some danger that the doctrine of the Church would

⁴⁷ Ignatius, Eph., IV:1f.; VI:2; Magn., VI:1; Trall., XII:2.

⁴⁸ Ignatius, Trall., XIII:2. ὑποτασσόμενοι τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ.

⁴⁹ Ignatius, Magn., VII:1. οὕτως μηδὲ ὑμεῖς ἄνευ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου . . .

become perverted. So the people were told to "flee from division and wrong doctrine. And follow as sheep where the shepherd is."⁵⁰ In other words, the bishop was the official authority on the faith, and his pronouncements took the place of the unregulated utterances of the prophets in the earlier years.⁵¹

If the function of the bishop was to ensure order and to preserve the true faith, his ability to do this was dependent upon the place he occupied in Church government. Ignatius advocated a hierarchical government comprising a three-fold ministry: deacons, presbyters, and bishop, with the last named occupying the key-stone position in the structure.⁵² Apparently these offices were quite distinct at Antioch, for Ignatius assumes that neither deacons nor presbyters could fulfill the duties of a bishop.⁵³

Still, it is important to notice that there were several elements lacking in the church of Antioch which have come to be associated with episcopal government. For instance, there is little sacerdotalism in the Ignatian bishop; he is more the administrator and pastor than the priest. Further, Ignatius makes no mention of an

⁵⁰ Ignatius, Philad., II:1. φεύχετε τὸν μερισμὸν καὶ τὰς κακοδιδασκαλίας· ὅπου δὲ ὁ ποιμὴν ἐστίν, ἕκεῖ ὡς πρόβατα ἀκολουθεῖτε.
cf. Magn., XIII:1; Trall., VI, VII.

⁵¹ cf. Lietzmann, The Founding of the Church Universal, p. 74f.

⁵² Ignatius, Trall., III:1; Ephes., II; Magn., II.

⁵³ Ignatius, Rom., IX.

apostolic succession. The delegations which he asked the Smyrneans, the Philadelphians, and Polycarp to send to Antioch were not for the purpose of consecrating a bishop, but^{to} congratulate the church for having elected one.⁵⁴ There is no hint, either, that the bishop is an autocrat. On the contrary, the bishop and presbyters are always considered a unit. Though church administration is carried on in the name of the bishop, the presbyters are close confidential advisers. And lastly, the bishop of Antioch is no diocesan bishop; his authority seems to extend over but one congregation, and the presbyters are officers within the congregation. In fact, as Lindsay has pointed out, the Church government of Ignatius has a close resemblance to the Presbyterian three-fold system of pastor, elders, and deacons.⁵⁵ At least the resemblance between the episcopacy advocated by Ignatius and that practiced by Cyprian is not nearly so great as it would first appear.

If this be the case, how do we account for the extravagant claims Ignatius makes for the bishop? "He who honours the bishop has been honoured by God; he who does anything without the knowledge of the bishop is serving the devil."⁵⁶ And again, "The bishop is also a

⁵⁴ Ignatius, Philad., X; Smyr., XI:2f.; Polyc., VII:1f.

⁵⁵ T.M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, p. 198.

⁵⁶ Ignatius, Smyr., IX:1. ὁ τιμῶν ἐπίσκοπον ὑπὸ θεοῦ, τετίμηται· ὁ λάθρα ἐπισκόπου τι πράσων τῷ διαβόλῳ λατρεύει.

type of the Father."⁵⁷ Such exalted ascriptions seem out of keeping with the conditions of the church at Antioch. In other words, what was the nature of the episcopal office as Ignatius saw it? Upon reading his epistles two impressions emerge: first, that he was convinced episcopal government was an essential characteristic of the Church; and, second, he was aware that many would contest his viewpoint.

In writing to the Trallians, Ignatius urged respect for the bishop, presbyters, and deacons, because "without these the name of Church is not given."⁵⁸ He felt the episcopate was supported not only by the ordinance of the Apostles but by the will of God.⁵⁹ So certain was he that no true church could exist without the episcopal framework that he spoke of bishops being appointed throughout the whole world,⁶⁰ though there must have been many churches during his lifetime, even in Syria, which had no bishop as distinct from the presbyters. This leads inevitably to the suspicion that behind Ignatius' impassioned pleas for honour to the bishop lies a history of conflict over that very issue. Streeter has pointed out⁶¹ that on the

⁵⁷ Ignatius, Trall., III:1. ὡς καὶ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ὄντα τύπον τοῦ πατρὸς. Cf. Eph., VI:1; Magn., II:1; VI:1.

⁵⁸ Ignatius, Trall., III:1. χωρὶς τούτων ἐκκλησίαι οὐ καλεῖται.

⁵⁹ Ignatius, Trall., VII:1.

⁶⁰ Ignatius, Eph., III:2.

⁶¹ B.H. Streeter, The Primitive Church, p. 163. I am not so ready to accede to Streeter's other contention that Ignatius was a neurotic (pp. 163ff.). T.M. Lindsay

episcopal lists Ignatius was only the second bishop from the Apostles, while his Roman contemporary was the sixth. This betokens a late origin for episcopacy in Antioch, and explains why the bishop felt such a pressing need for defending it.

Bearing these facts in mind, then, our next problem is Ignatius' view of Church unity upon which he lays such stress in his letters. What was the relation of the bishop to this unity? The Syrian saint is quite clear on this point - unity comes as a result of strict obedience to the regularly appointed ecclesiastical authorities. The constant refrain throughout his letters is "see that you follow the bishop."⁶² It has been maintained by some that the unity which Ignatius advocated was "fundamentally something spiritual and mystical,"⁶³ as though it were primarily a union between the believer and God. The facts, however, do not support such an assumption;⁶⁴ far from using ἐνότης (or even ἐνώσις) in a Pauline sense or as Irenaeus would have used it, Ignatius makes it depend on obedience to and support of the bishop.

⁶¹(cont.) seems closer to the truth when he ascribes Ignatius' high-flown metaphors to the exaltation of anticipated martyrdom and "the Oriental extravagance of language natural to a Syrian." The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries, p. 193.

⁶² Ignatius, Smyr., VIII:1. Πάντες τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ἀκολουθεῖτε. Cf. Eph., IV:1; V:3; Magn., VI:1; VII:1; Trall., II:1f.; Phil., VIII:1.

⁶³ T.M. Lindsay, Op. cit., p. 190.

⁶⁴ As has been ably demonstrated by C.C. Richardson, The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch, p. 33.

It is true, of course, that the bishop is the center of unity only because he stands for Christ,⁶⁵ so it is not incorrect to state that Christ is the ultimate unity of the Church,⁶⁶ with the bishop standing as His representative upon earth. But at the same time, it should be noted that Ignatius applied his idea of unity to one congregation alone. He never adverted to an official or legal union of all the churches. The authority and importance of the bishop in maintaining unity went no further than the individual community of which he was the head.⁶⁷ This does not mean that Ignatius had no sense of the Catholic Church. On the contrary, he had the liveliest interest in and sense of unity with all other churches, as his letters give abundant testimony. But outside the individual congregation there existed a unity, not of discipline, but of faith and love under Christ, the invisible Bishop and Head of the Church.⁶⁸

There seems every reason to believe that the theory of episcopal sovereignty enunciated by Ignatius was somewhat exxagerated in order to overcome objections from dissident elements in his own church. Whether the bishop of Antioch ever obtained the unqualified obedience

⁶⁵ Ignatius, Magn., III:1; VI:1; Trall., II; III; Smyr., VIII.

⁶⁶ Ignatius, Magn., VII:2; XV:1; Eph., IV:2.

⁶⁷ On this cf. Harnack, History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 73, esp. the footnotes.

⁶⁸ Ignatius, Eph., III-V; Magn., I.

claimed as his due, remains doubtful. But while practice probably never came up to theory until long after Ignatius was martyred, the theory remained to have a tremendous effect on the churchmanship of subsequent ages. It survived as an ideal, commended not only by the martyr-death of its author but by the support it gave to the belief in rigid hierarchical control.

Not until the time of Cyprian were the claims of the episcopate given such attention again. Though a world of difference separated the calm western legalist from his passionate eastern forebear, Cyprian and Ignatius had a great deal in common. The rights of the bishop and devotion to unity occupied much of the thought of both. In fact, so close is their spiritual affinity, that it is difficult to realize that almost a century and a half intervened between them.

In those intervening years while the Church was gradually appropriating the Ignatian view of the ministry, a new element was also added. The presbyter and bishop suddenly became priests (sacerdotes). This astonishing transformation of the New Testament ministry is not mentioned by Irenaeus but appears without explanation or apology for the first time in the writings of Tertullian.⁶⁹ Not only are the bishops, presbyters, and deacons

⁶⁹ Tertullian, De exhort. cast., 7; De monog., 11f.

sharply distinguished,⁷⁰ as they had been before, but the former two are invested with a special power: the power of administering the sacrifice of Christ in the Holy Communion; it was the beginning of the Roman mass. The figures of speech, the terminology, and even the interpretation used in this rite were derived from the Old Testament priesthood and taken over for the use of the Church. The bishop now became a "high priest" (summus sacerdos) like the Jewish high priest in the old dispensation.⁷¹ Because of this distinction, the division between the clergy and the laity was drawn even more sharply. Tertullian likens the laity to the plebs and the clergy to the ordo or senatorial rank.⁷² - roughly similar to the commons and the nobility.

Curiously enough, while Tertullian affirms the clean separation between clergy and laity, he says almost in the same breath that the laity are priests as well!

Are not even we laity priests?
 . . . It is the authority of the Church, and the honour which has acquired sanctity through a joint session of the Order, which has established the difference between the Order and the laity.

⁷⁰ Tertullian, De praescrip. haer., 32, 41; De bapt., 17.

⁷¹ Tertullian, De bapt., 17; De ieiun., 13. Cf. J.H. Bernard, "The Cyprianic Doctrine of the Ministry," The Early History of the Church and the Ministry, pp. 221ff.

⁷² Tertullian, De exhort. cast., 7; Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 19.

Accordingly, where there is no joint session of the ecclesiastical Order, you offer, and baptize; and are priest, alone for yourself. But where three are, a church is, even though they be laity.⁷³

This, then, was the general view of the ministry when Cyprian became bishop of Carthage. While it seemed to work out fairly well in practice it was never very clearly stated in theory, with the result that contradictory and even illogical ideas of the ministry flourished. Strong and forceful bishops wielded enormous power, not only over their own clergy but over neighbouring bishops as well. Weak prelates were just as often ruled by their own clergy. It was largely due to Cyprian that such a condition was changed. Thanks to his gifted pen and his logically trained mind, he was able to express his convictions in a way that profoundly influenced the Church for centuries.

In tracing the outlines of Cyprian's thought, it would be just as well to begin with his conception of the Church, for although Irenaeus and Tertullian both had a high regard for the Church, it was Cyprian who brought this regard to its highest consummation. He

⁷³ "Nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus? . . . Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiae auctoritas, et honor per ordinis consessum sanctificatus; adeo ibi ecclesiastici ordinis non est consessus, et offert et tinguit sacerdos, est ibi solus. Sed et ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici." Tertullian, De exhort. cast., 7.

repeatedly calls the Church "our Mother,"⁷⁴ and the "root"⁷⁵ of our faith. No one, he asserted, can be a Christian outside the Church.⁷⁶ Perhaps the most famous sentence Cyprian ever wrote declares, "He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother."⁷⁷ Not even a believer who is martyred for his faith can hope for salvation unless he dies "in the peace of the Church."⁷⁸

Such an uncompromising attitude toward the Church was undoubtedly necessitated in part by the rigours of the Decian persecution. Only if the Church insisted on strict obedience to the ecclesiastical organization could it hope to survive.. But in Cyprian there is more than mere expediency behind his churchmanship. There is a typically Roman love of order and good management as well as pride in the universality of the Church's extension. He looks with haughty disdain upon those who will not conform to ecclesiastical control. "For indeed it ought not to pertain to the majesty or dignity of the catholic Church, to concern itself with what the

⁷⁴ Cyprian, Epp., 10:4; 15:2; 16:3f. Tertullian also calls the Church "mother" (De Orat., 2; De Monog., 7; Adv. Marc., V:4), but there is not the warmth of feeling behind the use of the term that we find in Cyprian.

⁷⁵ "radicis et matris" in Ep., 45:1.

⁷⁶ "Quisque ille est et qualiscumque est, christianus non est qui in Christi ecclesia non est." Ep. 55:24. Cf. 4:4.

⁷⁷ "Habere non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem." De unitate, 6.

⁷⁸ Cyprian, De unitate, 14.

audacity of heretics and schismatics may attempt among themselves."⁷⁹ But most of all, Cyprian has an abiding passion for the Church for its own sake. Just as Irenaeus waxed oratorical whenever he considered Christian doctrine, so Cyprian's eloquence bursts forth every time he comes to the subject of the Church.

Thus also the Church suffused by the light of the Lord, sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused, nor is the unity of the body separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, liberally flowing, yet her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in the results of her fruitfulness; from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated.⁸⁰

Benson, in his definitive biography of Cyprian,

⁷⁹ "Neque enim ad catholicae ecclesiae majestatem pariter ac dignitatem pertinere debet quid apud se haereticorum et schismaticorum moliatur audacia." Cyprian, *Ep.* 59:9. Cf. 73:11.

⁸⁰ "Sic et ecclesia Domini luce perfusa per orbem totum radios suos porrigit: unum tamen lumen est quod ubique diffunditur, nec unitas corporis separatur. Ramos suos in universam terram copia ubertatis extendit, profluentes largitur rivos latius pandit: unum tamen caput est et origo una et una mater fecunditatis successibus copiosa: illius fetu nascimur, illius lacte nutrimur, spiritus ejus animamur." Cyprian, *De unitate*, 5. On Cyprian's love of the Church, cf. Benson, *Cyprian*, p. 191.

asks whether Cyprian created the idea of the aggregate Church.⁸¹ The answer he gives is a decisive "no". But it is certain that from the time of Cyprian onwards the symbol of the catholic Church, the great "Una Sancta," fired the imagination of Christians as it had never done before. Nor can this be ascribed to coincidence; without a doubt the passion for a united Church, the pride in its achievements, and the concern for its purity that are found in Cyprian's letters made Christendom aware of the potentialities in its world-wide organization.

Considering his exalted estimation of the Church, it is not surprising that Cyprian had an equally high regard for the Christian ministry.⁸² Ordination, according to him, conferred not only an administrative office, but primarily a priestly one.⁸³ His doctrine of the priesthood was first of all a doctrine of sacrifice⁸⁴ and intercession.⁸⁵ Like Tertullian before him, Cyprian finds the antecedents for the ministry in the institutions of the Old Testament. Christ is the high priest,⁸⁶ the Christian

⁸¹ Benson, Cyprian, pp. 189ff.

⁸² The most thorough treatment of this is by J.H. Bernard, "The Cyprianic Doctrine of the Ministry," in The Early History of the Church and the Ministry, pp. 224-240.

⁸³ Though J.H. Bernard (Op. cit., p. 226) maintains that Cyprian reserves the term sacerdos for the bishop as distinct from the presbyter. Thus collegium sacerdotale is the college of bishops. Cf. Ep. 55:1,8.

⁸⁴ Cf. Ep., 57:3; De dom. orat., 4; De unitate, 13,18.

⁸⁵ Cf. Epp. 67:2; 31:5; De lapsis, 29.

⁸⁶ "Summus sacerdos Dei Patris." Ep. 63:14.

bishop is the priest, while presbyters and deacons find their counterpart in the Levitical tribe.⁸⁷ It is also characteristic of Cyprian that presbyters have very few powers, and they can exercise no independent authority apart from the bishop.⁸⁸ They did not assist either at ordinations or consecrations, nor did they have a separate voice in the election of a bishop. As a matter of policy, Cyprian always consulted his prebyters before arriving at any important decision,⁸⁹ and the presbyters sat with the bishop in judging cases of church discipline.⁹⁰ But even there, they had only an advisory position subordinate always to the bishop. Even the celebration of the Eucharist was a delegated privilege.⁹¹

It is clear that Cyprian ruled his own presbyters with an iron hand. So severe was his discipline that grumbling was heard in the ranks. Then, when he went into voluntary exile during a time of persecution, the presbyters for once were able to exercise an authority they had never had before. The absent bishop became alarmed at this dangerous development and wrote a sharp reprimand:

For what danger ought we not to fear
from the Lord's displeasure, when

⁸⁷ cf. Cyprian, Epp. 1:2; 3:1.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 8; 9; 30; 31:6.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 38:1; 24:1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 19:2; 43:2.

⁹¹ Ibid., 61:3; 5:2.

some of the presbyters, remembering neither the gospel nor their own place, and, moreover, considering neither the Lord's future judgment nor the bishop now placed over them, claim to themselves entire authority (a thing which was never in any wise done under our predecessors), with discredit and contempt of the bishop?⁹²

This only underlines the fact that the bishop is the center of Cyprian's ecclesiastical system. Unlike Ignatius, Cyprian had no idea of an episcopate that was not monarchical. The bishop is an absolute ruler within the limits of his diocese.⁹³ For this reason there could be only one bishop in each church, but he was an absolute necessity. In short, the bishop is of the very essence of the Church.⁹⁴ For him, Cyprian reserves his highest expressions of honour: "For the glory of the Church is the glory of the bishop."⁹⁵ When Lucian, bishop of Rome, returned to his church after a period of banishment, Cyprian congratulated him, saying, "Now that a bishop returns as a confessor of the Lord, and His priest, it

⁹² "Quod enim non periculum metuere debemus de offensa Domini, quando aliqui de presbyteris nec evangelii nec loci sui memores, sed neque futurum Domini iudicium neque nunc sibi praepositum episcopum cogitantes, quod numquam omnino sub antecessoribus factum est, cum contumelia et contemptu praepositi totum sibi vindicent?" Cyprian, Ep. 16:1. Cf. 15:1f.; 17:2.

⁹³ Cyprian, Epp. 4:4; 43:5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 33:1; 44:2; 49:2; 66:5,8; De unitate, 7.

⁹⁵ "Ecclesiae enim gloria praepositi gloria est." Cyprian, Ep. 13:1.

appears that the Lord also is now returning."⁹⁶ For, he concludes in another instance, "The Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers."⁹⁷

It is interesting to note that the title "pope" was applied to Cyprian long before it was used for a Roman bishop.⁹⁸ Though the term was probably used first as an affectionate and respectful sobriquet for the distinguished North African prelate, it later became a title to designate bishops of outstanding eminence. There can be no doubt that Cyprian earned the name; he was an autocratic father in every sense of the word. He was passionately devoted to his flock and did not spare himself in furthering their welfare. But he would brook no interference or insubordination. For schismatics he had nothing but disdain and contempt. To act as they do, he argued, they must be mad or too sunk in sin to be reclaimed. In either case, he prefers to ignore them unless he is goaded into action by their attacks on the Church.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ "Sic nunc episcopo confessore Domini et sacerdote redeunte appareat et Dominum iam redire." Cyprian, Ep. 61:4.

⁹⁷ "Ecclesia super episcopos constituatur et omnis actus ecclesiae per eosdem praepositos gubernetur." Ibid., 33:1.

⁹⁸ "Cypriano papae", Ep. 30:1. Cf. 8:1; 23:1; 31:1; 36:1. Cf. Benson, Cyprian, pp. 29ff. Significantly, it is the Roman prebyters who call Cyprian "papa."

⁹⁹ Cf. Cyprian, Epp. 52:4; 55:24; 59:2f. In the case of the Novatian schism, however, Cyprian wrote to the confessors who had broken with Cornelius because of malinformation. Cyprian was successful in bringing them back into

Within the church, however, Cyprian keeps an ever-watchful eye on dissident elements. He urges complete obedience to the bishop as the best preventive against schism.¹⁰⁰ When revolt appears imminent, he does not hesitate to exercise the powers of admonition and censure,¹⁰¹ or if it is sufficiently serious, deposition (in the case of the lower ministerial orders) or even excommunication.¹⁰²

Such measures usually proved adequate to insure conformity within the rank and file of the Church, but what was to be done in the case of an erring bishop? Such cases must have proved most embarrassing to Cyprian, who held such an exalted view of the episcopal office. Usually, he tried to put wayward bishops right by sending them a tactful letter. This was most effective when the aberration was caused by ignorance of the correct Church tradition or procedure.¹⁰³ It was more difficult when a bishop was lazy or too absorbed in the affairs of the world. In such a case, Cyprian wrote a general treatise in which the particular evil was denounced in the strongest terms, and then he saw to it that the document was given sufficient circulation to fall into the right hands.¹⁰⁴

99(cont.) the orthodox ranks and rejoices at their return. Cf. Epp. 46; 47; 49; 51; 53; 54.

¹⁰⁰ Cyprian, Epp. 4:4; 59:5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 16:4.

¹⁰² Ibid., 3:3.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 63:1f.

¹⁰⁴ Cyprian, De lapsis, 6. Cf. the parallel case of the presbyter-executor at Furni: Ep. 1.

Much more serious was the presence of heresy or scandalous conduct in a bishop. In such a situation, the gravity of the offense demanded drastic action - excommunication of the offending party or at least deposition to the status of layman. During the persecution in Spain, two bishops, Basilides and Martial, lapsed from the faith. Thereupon the other clergy deposed the two and consecrated others in their place. Cyprian praised their action, saying:

On this account a people obedient to the Lord's precepts, and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a sinful prelate, and not to associate themselves with the sacrifices of a sacrilegious priest, especially since they themselves have the power either of choosing worthy priests, or of rejecting unworthy ones.¹⁰⁵

In the case of heresy, the purity of the Church demanded equally radical measures. The orthodox bishops would depose the heretic after a regular trial had established his guilt.

For, for that reason, dearest brother, the body of priests is abundantly large, joined together by the bond of mutual concord, and the link of unity; so that if any one of our college should try to originate heresy, and to lacerate and lay waste Christ's flock,

¹⁰⁵ "Propter quod plebs obsequens praeceptis dominicis et Deum metuens a peccatore praeposito separare se debet, nec se ad sacrilegi sacerdotis sacrificia miscere, quando ipso maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes vel indignos recusandi." Cyprian, Ep. 67:3. Cf. also Ep. 65:4.

others may help, and as it were, as useful and merciful shepherds, gather together the Lord's sheep into the flock.¹⁰⁶

Except in the event of vicious behaviour or heretical belief, a bishop should be obeyed explicitly. To all intents and purposes, he was beyond ordinary jurisdictional discipline, unless the grossest misconduct made summary action by his fellow bishops a necessity. Cyprian was quite insistent on this point:

. . . since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has the power both of preferring us in the government of His Church, and of judging us in our conduct there.¹⁰⁷

In other words, every bishop was completely independent within his own diocese and could exercise absolute authority there.¹⁰⁸ He received his right of jurisdiction

¹⁰⁶ "Idcirco enim, frater carissime, copiosum corpus sacerdotum concordiae mutuae glutino atque unitatis vinculo copulatum, ut si quis ex collegio nostro haeresim facere et gregem Christi lacerare et vastare temptaverit, subveniant ceteri, qua pastores utiles et misericordes oves dominicas in gregem colligant." Cyprian, Ep. 68:3.

¹⁰⁷ ". . . quando habeat omnis episcopus pro licentia libertatis et potestatis suae arbitrium proprium tamque judicari ab alio non possit, quam nec ipse possit alterum judicare. Sed expectemus universi iudicium Domini nostri Iesu Christi qui unus et solus habet potestatem et praeponendi nos in ecclesiae suae gubernatione et de actu nostro iudicandi." Cyprian, Sent. Episc., praef.

¹⁰⁸ cf. Cyprian, Epp. 3:1; 64:1; 72:3; 73:26.

directly from Christ, the great Head of the Church, and he was answerable to Him alone at the day of Judgment.

Such at least was the theory of episcopal authority as Cyprian held it; but putting that theory into practice was difficult indeed. It was impossible for a man with Cyprian's leadership ability and domineering nature not to exert a profound influence on the rest of the episcopal college. Despite his disavowal of any authority outside his diocese,¹⁰⁹ there can be little doubt that by his letters and in the councils of the North African Church he wielded an enormous power. The unanimity of the eighty-seven African bishops on the question of heretical baptism points strongly in that direction.¹¹⁰

The frequency of councils held during Cyprian's episcopate is quite suggestive. By means of them, the autonomy of the bishop could be upheld, and at the same time a general unanimity of action could be secured. Perhaps Cyprian found it a convenient means of ruling without appearing to do so. But he insisted that the only pressure a council could bring to bear on a bishop was moral and psychological. The findings of the councils were not legally binding on anyone. Thus, writes Benson, "The College of Bishops . . . is the very form and substance of the inherited free government, advising by resolution, commanding by mutual consent, yet not even

¹⁰⁹ cf. Cyprian, Epp. 73:26; 55:21; 72:3.

¹¹⁰ Cyprian, Sent. Episc.

when unanimous constraining a single dissentient bishop."¹¹¹ True, it took a strong-willed bishop to withstand the pressure of majority opinion, but if he did he was unassailable.

During the years of the Decian persecution, problems relating to Church life multiplied many-fold: problems of the lapsed, problems arising from exiled leaders, problems of succession. All these were pressing for immediate answer, so decisions had to be made on the spot by each bishop or presbyter without the advantage of consultation with his fellow Church leaders. Consequently, it is not surprising that a great variety of answers were given to each problem, differing according to the circumstances of each case. As soon as a council could be called, the various decisions were reviewed and a common attitude sought. But it was not always easy for a bishop to reverse a policy in his diocese once it had been put into operation, simply because the rest of the episcopal college thought a different policy more suitable. Thus a number of bishops refused to conform. In such cases, Cyprian merely urged that differences of opinion be accepted with charity and that unity be maintained.¹¹² Generally, this solution proved quite adequate, and further it provided an inclusive elasticity in the matter of

¹¹¹ Benson, Cyprian, p. 191. Cf. Lightfoot, "The Christian Ministry," Commentary on Philippians, pp. 242ff.

¹¹² Cf. Cyprian, Ep. 72:3.

Church practice which has rarely been equalled since.¹¹³

Cyprian seems to imply that the place of the bishop in his diocese corresponds to the place of the entire episcopate throughout the whole Church.¹¹⁴ If so, he was in error. Whereas each bishop was an absolute ruler within his own jurisdiction, the college of bishops could exercise no corresponding authority over its own members. Cyprian appears to be the most jealous defender of this episcopal freedom and nowhere does it come out more clearly than in his relations with Rome. By the middle of the third century, the church of Rome was securely established as the principal church in the West. Not only was it located in the political capital of the Empire, but it claimed a double apostolic foundation: both Peter and Paul had died and were buried there.¹¹⁵ It had become customary for the churches of Gaul, Spain, and North Africa to keep in close touch with the Roman bishop, who traditionally occupied the place of counsellor, arbitrator, or judge among them..

Cyprian freely acknowledges Rome's unique position when he alluded "to the throne of Peter, and to the chief

¹¹³ Cf. R.H. Charles' remarks on Jewish inclusiveness, Religious Development Between the Old and the New Testament, pp. 178f.

¹¹⁴ Cyprian, Epp. 66:8; 1:2; De unitate, 23. Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 180.

¹¹⁵ For an elaboration of the case for Peter's founding of the Roman church, cf. G. Edmundson, The Church in Rome in the First Century, pp. 44ff.

church whence priestly unity takes its source."¹¹⁶ Again he admitted that "Rome from her greatness plainly ought to take precedence of Carthage."¹¹⁷ But he never conceded any jurisdictional authority to Rome outside the bounds of its own see. The closest he came to doing so was when he was in voluntary exile and the church of Rome was without a bishop. The problem of the lapsed had become pressing, and the Roman presbyters wrote to the church at Carthage giving their policy on the matter. When Cyprian received the letter, he wrote at once to Rome justifying his retirement and concluding:

I judged it well to stand by your judgment, lest our proceedings, which ought to be united and to agree in all things, should in any respect be different,

and politely thanks them for "having the advantage of your counsel."¹¹⁸

This, however, is far from admitting Roman overlordship, and even such a note of concession was changed as soon as a bishop sat on the Roman cathedra. Cyprian writes to the Roman bishop addressing him as "brother",

¹¹⁶ ". . . ad Petri cathedram adque ad ecclesiam principalem unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est." Cyprian, Ep. 58:14; written to Cornelius, bishop of Rome.

¹¹⁷ "Plane quoniam pro magnitudine sua debeat Carthaginem Roma praecedere." Ibid., 52:2.

¹¹⁸ "Standum putavi et cum vestra sententia, ne actus noster qui adunatus esse et consentire circa omnia debet in aliquo discreparet. . . . communicato etiam vobiscum consilio." Ibid., 20:3. Cf. 9; 27.

and the answers from Rome address Cyprian in the same way¹¹⁹ - a term of strict equality. Cyprian is almost always friendly and respectful, but he doesn't ask for any advice or help. On the contrary, he rebukes one pope for being intimidated by schismatics,¹²⁰ he tells another one to appoint a new bishop in Gaul,¹²¹ and he advises pope Stephen of what the North African bishops had decided with regard to heretical baptism (a decision, incidentally, contrary to the will of Rome).¹²²

Upon occasion Cyprian could become quite sarcastic about Rome and could voice his condemnation in the strongest terms. When pope Stephen circulated a letter among the Eastern bishops, virtually excommunicating them over the question of rebaptizing converted heretics, it aroused a storm of protest, especially from Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Though Cyprian probably never used the violent language of Firmilian, he would have endorsed such sentiments of the Cappadocian as these:

He is really the schismatic who has made himself an apostate from the communion of ecclesiastical unity. For while you think that all may be excommunicated by you, you have excommunicated yourself alone from

¹¹⁹ cf. Cyprian, Epp. 44; 45; 47-52; 61; 68; 72. True, this form of address is only a formality, but even a formality can be significant at times.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹²¹ Ibid., 68.

¹²² Ibid., 72.

all.¹²³

In a letter to Pompey, Cyprian does not hesitate to criticise Stephen in a very satirical vein,¹²⁴ or in another connection to compare Stephen's actions very unfavourably with his own.¹²⁵ It is evident from this that Cyprian never paid fealty to the Roman see. If he strongly protested against the coercion of a bishop by a council, how could he condone coercion by a single individual? if the episcopal college could not rule any one bishop, it followed as a matter of course that no single bishop could rule the college.¹²⁶

Yet the bishop remains, for Cyprian, the unity of the Church. All his writings either express this fact or tacitly assume it.¹²⁷ As he stated it in one memorable passage: "Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church."¹²⁸

¹²³ "Si quidem ille est vere schismaticus qui se a communione ecclesiasticae unitatis apostatam fecerit. Dum enim putas omnes a te abstinere posse, solum te ab omnibus abstinuisti." Cyprian, Ep. 75:24.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 74. Though, as St. Augustine (Contra Donatistas, V:23) pointed out, this difference of opinion did not constitute a schism.

¹²⁵ "Neque enim quisquam nostrum episcopum se episcoporum constituit aut tyrannico terrore ad obsequendi necessitatem collegas suos adigit." Cyprian, Sent. Episc., praef.

¹²⁶ Cf. Benson, Cyprian, pp. 196ff.

¹²⁷ E.g. Cyprian, Epp. 3:3; 45:1; 46:47; 48:4; 49:2; 66:5; 81:1; De unitate; etc.

¹²⁸ "Unde scire debes episcopum in ecclesia esse et ecclesiam in episcopo et si qui [sic] cum episcopo non

It is easy to see how this would bring unity within a single diocese, and through the apostolic succession there would be an historical unity within the whole catholic Church;¹²⁹ but how would there be any practical unity when every bishop was practically autonomous?

It is all very well to speak of "the Church which is catholic and one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another,"¹³⁰ but what makes the priests cohere? It does little good to have Cyprian tell us:

And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole.¹³¹

The crucial question is, what forms the basis of this unity? How is it given expression? Through what medium does it operate? A preliminary answer to these questions is found in the phrase "the cement of concord."¹³² This

¹²⁸(cont.) sit in ecclesia non esse." Cyprian, Ep. 66:8.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 69:3ff.

¹³⁰ "Ecclesia quae catholica una est scissa non sit neque divisa, sed sit utique conexa et cohaerentium sibi invicem sacerdotum glutino copulata." Ibid., 66:8.

¹³¹ "Quam unitatem tenere firmiter et vindicare debemus, maxime episcopi qui in ecclesia praesidemus, ut episcopatum quoque ipsum unum adque indivisum probemus. . . . Episcopatus unus est, cuius a singulis in solidum pars tenetur." De unitate, 5

This is the medium of Church unity - mutual agreement, understanding, sympathy. Certainly it is the complete antithesis of coercion, mechanical uniformity, or dictatorial government. Such measures might bring about the external trappings of unity, but it would have little resemblance to the unity of which Cyprian wrote.

Without a doubt, Cyprian's unity was a spiritual, a moral, even a mystical one, if you will. Deriving his ideal from the unity subsisting within the Holy Trinity, he predicated the same unity of the Church on earth. Or, adverting to the mystical unity existing between Christ and His Church, he drew the conclusion that this unity must express itself in the relation between various congregations or episcopal sees.¹³³ Of one thing Cyprian is most insistent:¹³⁴ the unity of the Church does not consist in the subservience of all Christendom to a human summus sacerdos. Even in his exegesis of the famous passage on the keys of the kingdom, he makes Peter only the symbol of unity rather than the first pope:

And although to all the apostles,
after His [Christ's] resurrection, He
gives an equal power . . . yet,

¹³² "concordiae mutuae glutino." Ep. 68:3. Cf. De unitate, 23: "Plebs una in solidam corporis unitatem concordiae glutino copulata."

¹³³ Cyprian, De unitate, passim.

¹³⁴ Despite repeated attempts by the Romanists to make him support the papal claims. Cf. Benson, Cyprian, pp. 200ff.

that He might set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as being from one.¹³⁵

The important thing is that the Church began as a unity with power vested in one man, though shared equally by all the Apostles. The fact that it was Peter who was that man is of but secondary importance.¹³⁶

If the episcopate is the chief agent of unity, and mutual agreement is the medium through which it operates, what is the basis of unity - the propulsive power, so to speak, which works through the agent. The answer, as given by Cyprian, is love.¹³⁷ It is this, the greatest of the Christian virtues, which distinguishes the orthodox Christians from the heretics and schismatics. The unity of the Church is the product of this love, which explains why the schismatics, who lack this love, break

¹³⁵ "Et quamvis apostolis omnibus post resurrectionem suam parem potestatem tribuat . . . tamen ut unitatem manifestaret, unitatis eiusdem originem ab uno incipientem sua auctoritate disposuit." Cyprian, De unitate, 4. Cf. Ep. 70:3.

¹³⁶ A remarkably brave Roman Catholic scholar has expressed it thus: "Dass es Einer war, mit dem die Kirche ihren anfang nahm, ist ihm die Hauptsache; dass dieser Eine gerade Petrus war, ist Nebensache." Hugo Koch, "Cyprian und der römische Primat," Texte und Untersuchungen, XXXV:1, p. 11. Cf. also J.H. Bernard, "The Cyprianic Doctrine of the Ministry," The Early History of the Church and the Ministry, pp. 242ff.

¹³⁷ Harnack is, I believe, the first one to point this out clearly. He writes: "But the unity of the Church, which is an attribute of equal importance with her truth, because this union is only brought about by love, primarily appears in the unity of the episcopate." History of Dogma, vol. II, p. 86.

away from unity.¹³⁸ Such is the belief which underlies Cyprian's greatest treatise, On the Unity of the Church.¹³⁹ The schismatics such as Novatian and Novatus were guilty, not of heresy, nor immorality, nor unreasonableness, but of a heartless lack of Christian charity.

It is clear, then, that the unity of the Church rested ultimately on a deep love which resolved not to give up brotherly communion despite all differences. Not only must there be a passionate desire for unity but a willingness to sacrifice much in order to maintain it. Of course, Cyprian assumes the Church will remain true "to the Lord and the evangelical and apostolic tradition."¹⁴⁰ Unless it does, the love of God will not abide in it and unity will be impossible. But granted the Church does not depart from the traditional faith, unity is only possible if love of the brethren is paramount in the hearts of all Christians, especially the Christian clergy.

There are two main causes for schism, thought Cyprian. One is unadulterated evil, and the other is misapplied good. The first cause is pride and its concomitants: jealousy, envy, and the will to power. From such sins come a disparagement of Church order, an undermining of the

¹³⁸ "Qui nec fraternam caritatem nec ecclesiasticam unitatem tenuit etiam quod prius fuerat amisit." Cyprian, Ep. 55:24.

¹³⁹ Esp. De unitate, 14ff.

¹⁴⁰ "ad dominicam et ad evangelicam adque apostolicam traditionem." Cyprian, Ep. 74:10.

priesthood, and opposition to the episcopate. This leads inevitably to a divided Church and the scattering of God's sheep.¹⁴¹ Little wonder that the good bishop warned against these sins with an urgency hardly equaled elsewhere in his writings. But while such human characteristics are patently evil, there is another which might appear commendable under certain circumstances, but which also tended toward schism:

Moreover, impatience makes heretics in the Church, and, after the likeness of the Jews, drives them in opposition to the peace and charity of Christ as rebels, to hostile and raging hatred.¹⁴²

It is easy to see how impatience can bring about division. The history of protestantism, alone, can produce many unhappy examples of clerics, or even laymen, inspired by the ideal of a perfect Church, who become impatient with their fellow Christians and think they can hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God by setting up a newer and purer sect. There are times when such ecclesiastical surgery may be necessary, but on the whole, Cyprian is right. The outcome of the schism is far worse than the evil which inspired it. Zeal we must cultivate, but

¹⁴¹ Cf. especially Cyprian, De zelo et livore, 6.

¹⁴² "Impatientia etiam in ecclesia haereticos facit et ad Iudaeorum similitudinem contra Christi pacem et caritatem rebelles ad hostilia et furiosa odia compellit." Cyprian, De bono patientia, 19.

impatience has no place in Christ's Church. By means of the latter, even the best of saints founder on the rocks of schism.

Cyprian may have had many faults, not the least of which was an unfortunate legalism. But Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox Christians alike could with profit pursue the same love of the world-wide Church which he had. Though we pay lip service to his words: "God is one, and His Church is one, and the faith is one, and the people are joined into a substantial unity of body by the cement of concord,"¹⁴³ we refuse to accept as brothers those whose views differ from our own, even though they be minor matters of the faith. The great truth which Cyprian not only grasped but in large measure exemplified is this: If love prevail, disagreement may exist without producing disunity. The whole Church of Christ, divided as it is today, would do well to ponder that lesson afresh.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ "Unus Deus est et Christus unus et una ecclesia ejus et fides una et plebs una in solidam corporis unitatem concordiae glutino copulata." Cyprian, De unitate, 23. Cf. De dom. orat., 30.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Benson, Cyprian, p. 424.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS

Πιστεύομεν εἰς μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικὴν
καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν. 1.

It is one of the ironies of history that the theories of Church government enunciated by Cyprian in the West were ultimately enshrined in the East, where they exist almost unaltered to the present day. Meanwhile the West moved on toward greater centralization of control with Rome looming ever larger and her bishops claiming ever more power and authority for themselves. A number of circumstances combined to bring about ultimate papal supremacy, for as an Anglican historian has aptly remarked, "the papacy has its roots not in Scripture, but in history."²

In the West, Rome never had a serious rival for the place of leadership in the Church. Unlike the East, there was in Italy, Africa, Spain, and Gaul a notable absence of great rival sees competing for primacy and power. Not only did tradition and history conspire to give Rome special eminence, but when the civil government moved to Byzantium, the Church inherited many of the rights and duties vacated by the State. It was natural at the same time that ecclesiastical government should tend to

¹ Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Vide Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, vol. II, pp. 57f.

² Alfred Fawkes, "Papacy," HERE, vol. 9, p. 621b.

reproduce the closely integrated system which had proved so effective in the civil authority. In short, the Church reincarnated the dying State; from the ashes of the imperial eagle rose a militant Christian dove. Though in theory the two were completely dissimilar, in practice they were seen to be largely identical; the crown became a tiara, and the Roman absolutism of the Caesars lived on in the absolutism of the popes.

This virtually completes the cycle of our study. Not only did the basis of Church^{unity} remain static until the time of the Reformation, but even subsequent to that religious upheaval, when the dissenters from Rome sought a reinterpretation of the Faith in terms of the Scriptures alone, no new unity of the Church was found. Rather, the Calvinists and Lutherans sought their unity in Scriptural doctrine, while the Anabaptists looked for a fresh unity of the Spirit. In fact, it might even be safe to say that the four bases of unity discoverable in the ante-Nicene Church are classic unities.³ That is, they are valid for all time, and they constitute, in one form or another, the unity of all subsequent expressions of Church life.

The preceding chapters have demonstrated how there were present in the early Church four principle bases of unity: the historical Christ, the Spirit, Scriptural

³ There are five, if we include papal absolutism. But it was not until the fifth century that the papacy claimed jurisdiction over all Christendom. Cf. the correspondence of Leo I (pope from 440-460 A.D.), esp. Ep. V in Migne, Patrologia Latine, vol. 54, p. 515.

doctrine, and episcopal government. An attempt has been made also, to indicate the causes which led to the successive shifts of emphasis from one to another. It would be profitable to ask at this juncture, what was the relative effectiveness of each unity? How much did each contribute to the solidarity of the Church? And what were the principle dangers or drawbacks inherent in each one?

Beginning with the first in order - the historical Christ - it is obvious at once that we have here a unitive force that is quite different from the others. During the lifetime of our Lord, He provided the ideal, in fact, the only possible unity of the little community of believers. His arresting personality, His miraculous powers, His evident authority - these stamped Him as the obvious center of all relationships between the disciples. Even after the ascension, it was the memory of this personal intimate contact with the Lord which provided the strongest element of cohesion in the infant Church. From this standpoint, such a unity was the most effective of all.

But this unity could not endure for long after the death of those who had known Christ in the flesh. In a sense, it is true that Christians even now can have an intimate and immediate contact with Christ. Not only in the Sacraments, but in the daily life and worship of the Church, there is a mystical union with the Redeemer that provides the quintessential vitality without which no believer can remain spiritually alive. But it would take a rare mystic indeed to deny that this sort of union

differs radically from that enjoyed by the disciples in the days of our Lord's earthly ministry.

To assert that the earthly Jesus no longer constitutes the effective unity of the Church is in no way to deny that Christ is still its Head and Ruler, or to minimize the presence of the heavenly Logos both in the Scriptures and the Sacraments. Indeed, were it to do so, what would be Christ's meaning in sending the Holy Spirit? Is it not the Spirit who is to "guide you into all truth," and to "be with you forever," and above all to "bear witness to me"?⁴ It would appear that Christ intentionally designated the Spirit as the functional unity of the Church when His earthly ministry was completed. This explains why the early Christians often confused the Spirit and Christ, for it was only through the Spirit that they could be "in Christ." Thus it may be said, without irreverence, that the historical Christ constituted the unity of the Church for a relatively short time. It was not because of any deficiency that He ceased to act as the chief unitive force, but simply because those who had known Him in the flesh were the only ones through whom that unity could be felt. When they died, the unity of the earthly Jesus passed with them.

An evaluation of the Spirit as an agent of unity is considerably more difficult.⁵ Spiritual enthusiasm has

⁴ John 16:13; 14:16; 15:26.

⁵ Vide Appendix B.

been one of the most potent causes of sectarianism in the history of the Church. Further, it is almost impossible to tell where legitimate religious fervour ends and illegitimate or irresponsible emotionalism begins. Sincerity is no guide here; the most misguided religious fanatics are often desperately sincere in their beliefs. Thus spiritual power is not an unmixed blessing. Its manifestations can so easily be counterfeited, or attributed to diametrically opposite sources, that the ecclesiastical hierarchy have traditionally looked upon it with grave suspicion if not even with complete repugnance. The experience of Montanism convinced the Church that it was best to leave all such spiritual exuberance strictly alone.

And yet there can be little doubt that the Church lost a vital part of its heritage when it renounced all free spiritual expression. The prostitutions of spiritual phenomena have received all too much attention in the history of the Church, while the power of self-rejuvenation which Christianity owes to the indwelling Spirit passes by, all but unnoticed. Hitherto, the Church has tried to solve the problem of spiritual manifestations by attempting to control the Spirit. The activity of the Spirit has been delimited to the "normal means of grace", by which is meant the Sacraments, the preaching of the Word, and the customary rites and offices of the Church. All of these are under clerical direction and are circumscribed by tradition, so they may be considered safe from embarrassing and unregulated spiritual

phenomena.

While this policy of control is nicely calculated to give the hierarchy a comfortable peace of mind, at the same time, it must be admitted that it tends to produce a condition of slow decay. It was this which Tertullian sensed when he pleaded for the free activity of the Spirit, it.⁶ Disturbing as these pneumatical phenomena may be to the status quo of the Church, they provide the new life which is so vitally necessary to development and growth. Much as a mighty river flooding the land may cause inconvenience, destruction, and perhaps even death, yet in its recession it leaves a thin layer of precious silt which enriches the worn-out soil; so the Spirit periodically floods over the Church discrediting out-moded institutions and purging false ideals to the inconvenience and apprehension of many. Yet in the act of destroying, the Spirit vivifies, and renewed vigour is the result. The Church cannot with impunity coerce or control the Spirit of God. Christ may have granted the power of binding and loosing to the Church, but this does not imply the right to bind and loose the Spirit.

The only legitimate rôle for Christians in this connection is a passive one. Our duty is not to curb but gratefully to receive the Spirit. Only one activity is permissible, that is the necessary one of discerning the spirits, to attempt a separation of the fraudulent from

⁶ Tertullian, De anima, 9 et passim; De spectaculis, 26.

the true. This, admittedly, is no facile task. Even the wisest may be deceived for a time. But the Spirit is its own authentication, and those who profess to "have the Spirit" may be evaluated through their works: "By their fruits ye shall know them."⁷

To recapitulate, the effectiveness of the Spirit as an agent of unity is impossible to determine with any accuracy. All that can be said is that the Spirit acts and continues to act in an effort to unite the Church by drawing Christians together in a warm fellowship and by purging out worldly elements that destroy its spiritual character. Both Irenaeus and Tertullian had a deep understanding of this.⁸ They make no attempt to define, much less to explain it. But there it is - a silent, often devious, but all-pervasive influence for truth and unity. When schismatics threatened to destroy this unity, none of the Church Fathers would have dreamed of suggesting that it was the fault of the Spirit. True, the Spirit might permit such declensions from the Church, but even when it did so, it was^{for} the purpose of effecting a higher and more fundamental unity.

It is not so difficult to evaluate doctrine as a basis of unity. To this day the Eastern Orthodox Church finds its cohesion in a common faith which is largely defined as a system of doctrine. Any agency which can

⁷ Matthew 7:16, 20 (A.V.).

⁸ Irenaeus, Adv. Haer., III:11; 17; 24; IV:33. Tertullian, vide supra footnote #6.

preserve an unbroken unity within as large a communion as that of the Orthodox churches is worthy of considerable respect. But the mere passage of time should not be our sole criterion. According to that standard the absolutism of Rome would have just as much to commend it. It is true that the Eastern Church has continued faithful to its doctrinal and liturgical tradition, but at the same time it has given little evidence of growth or development. If time had stood still with the Eastern Church, a more static condition could hardly be imagined.

In a sense, then, doctrine has proved most effective as a unifying force, but it has also been largely to blame for the cramped, stuffy parody of religion which kills the Spirit in an endeavour to preserve the letter of the Law. Within its sphere, it proved capable of preventing the Church from crumbling into a myriad Gnostic sects. But the sphere is limited, and disaster is sure to attend any attempt to make doctrine the sole basis for the Church's cohesion.

The chief criticism of episcopal government as the unity of the Church is that it proved unable to stop short of uniformity. Despite Cyprian's impassioned defence of the freedom of the bishop, the pressure of external events forced the western bishops into subservience to the Roman pontiff. Further, the emphasis on the visible hierarchical Church created a rift between the idea of Catholic and Evangelical Christianity - a distinction which may have had its roots as far back as

the time of Ignatius, but which became inevitable under Cyprian. Today these two terms are conceived as being opposed or almost antithetical. Such, certainly, was not the case in the earliest years of the Church nor should it ever be. In the deepest sense, catholic and evangelical should be almost synonymous, or at least they should be inseparable corollaries of the Christian fellowship.

As has been noted, the theory of episcopal government held by Cyprian was continued in the Orthodox churches of the East. But it was not episcopacy which united them; this was accomplished by doctrine. The freedom of the bishop, which was soon lost in the West, continued in the East, not because of any inherent power behind the theory, but because it suited the independent and individualistic spirit of the eastern hierarchy.⁹

In conclusion, it is impossible to avoid asking

⁹ The modern parallel of the Anglican Church would appear to contradict this statement. But perhaps only superficially so. The British love of freedom has intruded itself into ecclesiastical affairs quite as much as into things political. Thus, as a Church, the Anglican communion has resisted all attempts to impose authoritarian rule by the primate over the rest of the episcopal college. At the same time, there has always been an uneasy tension between the "high" and "low" church parties. The former are attracted to the authoritarianism of Rome (many of them ultimately becoming Roman), and the latter finding spiritual kinship with the "free" churches. This condition would support the thesis that episcopal government alone makes an unstable basis of unity. One cannot help feeling that it is the English character which has kept the Anglican Church in a state of equilibrium. The fact that Anglicanism has remained essentially British wherever it has gone, confirms this suspicion.

what lesson does the first three centuries of Church history offer those who seek the peace and unity of the Church today? The words of Dr. Hort offer wise counsel at this point: "At every turn we are constrained to feel that we can learn to good effect from the apostolic age only by studying its principles and ideals, not by copying its precedents."¹⁰ The primitive Church was by no means the perfect institution which some would make it today. Perhaps the early Christians saw more clearly than we can what the ideal Church should be, but perfection is a characteristic of the next world rather than of this. What, then, were the ideals which could be of use to us? There are two which come to mind, and together they form a balanced whole. The first was the ideal of Irenaeus, and the second formed the battle-cry of Tertullian: true doctrine and the true Spirit. To many, these two may seem almost antithetical. Certainly, in the history of the Church, the champions of both have not infrequently been at loggerheads with one another. And yet the conviction is inescapable that the two are essentially correlative rather than antagonistic. In fact, the one without the other is incomplete and even dangerous.

Christians who follow the Spirit alone are apt to be led astray by false spirits and thus degenerate into a myriad subjectivist sects. And, on the other hand, those who make Scriptural doctrine their sole authority

¹⁰ Hort, The Christian Ecclesia, p. 169. Cf. also John Oman, Vision and Authority, pp. 150f.

tend to become soulless legalists and bibliolaters. Both Spirit and doctrine are essential to the truth. Spirit makes the doctrine live; doctrine bears witness to the authenticity of the true Spirit.

Neither Irenaeus nor Tertullian embodied this truth completely in their own thought. Nor, indeed, can we. The limitations of the flesh, the pervasive influence of sin, and the bias of training and background make complete balance on our part impossible. But the ideal is there to be pursued, in the spirit of zeal tempered with charity. These two great unities of the Church are related to one another in an uneasy tension and so they must remain until the Kingdom comes. As a general principle, then, it may be stated that any proposal to restore Christian unity which is in full accord with true doctrine as revealed in Scripture and which allows the free expression of the Holy Spirit on all matters not contrary to Scripture cannot be far from the Will of God. For it is at these two points that God continues to make a direct impact upon men, and it^{is} here we should seek to recover the unity of the Body of Christ - the Church of the redeemed of God.

Appendix A

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

The text of the Greek New Testament used in this dissertation is the 16th edition of Nestle's Novum Testamentum Graece. Unless otherwise indicated, all English quotations from the Old Testament are taken from the Authorized Version, and New Testament quotations from the new American Revised Standard Version. The latter was used because it combines the latest textual emendations with a better style than is found in the Revised Version.

The text of the Apostolic Fathers used was the Loeb Classical Library edition, though Lightfoot's edition was consulted throughout. The Loeb Classics also provided the text for Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History. Quotations from Tertullian and Cyprian are taken from the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. It should be noted that the numbering of Cyprian's epistles followed in this work is that of the Oxford edition which differs from that employed in Migne's Patrologia. Almost all other selections and quotations from the Fathers come from Migne's Patrologia, in both the Greek and Latin Series. These include chiefly: Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Origen, and Jerome.

The English translations of the above stem, in the main, from three sources: The Loeb Classical Library, the Ante-Nicene Christian Library, and the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. I have, however, taken the liberty, when

the text seems to warrant it, of altering these translations in order to give a more literal rendering. In each case, the original is placed in a footnote, so dependence on the translation is unnecessary. Therefore, it has not appeared necessary to document the source of each individual translation, except in a general way as above.

Appendix B

ON DIVISIVE UNITIES

It has been objected that the activity of the Spirit, far from promoting unity, actually promotes division, schism, and discord. Whenever the Spirit breaks forth in the Church bringing with it new vitality and power, a rupture occurs. Montanus, Savonarola, Peter Waldo, the Anabaptists, John Wesley, and many others who were impelled by their inner spiritual experience to preach reform give ample illustration of this fact. Even the gentle Francis of Assisi came perilously close to the condemnation of Rome. Is, then, the Pauline injunction to "maintain the unity of the Spirit"¹ a virtual impossibility? Is every search for unity through spiritual means doomed to failure because it carries within it the seeds of its own destruction?

As an aid in helping us to answer these questions, it may be well to note that every unitive influence tends at the same time to be divisive. The centripetal forces of the Church have centrifugal elements within them. Thus, Christ, who formed the initial unity of the Church, not only helped to disrupt Judaism but even within the circle of the disciples He proved a σκάνδαλον to Judas. And in subsequent ages, the interpretation of Christ or the relation of the believer to Him (whether mystical or moral) has proved a fertile field for disagreement and

¹ Ephesians 4:3.

conflict. Or, take doctrine as a unitive force: where could one find a greater opportunity for violent controversy, polemic, or difference of opinion? The proceedings of synods and councils where the form of catholic doctrine was hammered out rarely display an irenical atmosphere. On the contrary, the air is heavy with denunciations, accusations of heresy, banishments, and excommunications.

But what about the unity of episcopal government? Surely here there is a force strong enough to control division and schism. Alas, such has not been the case in the history of the Church. Not only do bishops fulminate against bishops and prelates argue about the relative importance or authority of their respective sees, but even within a diocese, revolt by the priests against their bishop is not uncommon. In fact, it is safe to say that the more rigid a bishop's control over his flock, the greater is the likelihood of dissension and revolt.

It would seem, then, that everything which tends to unite men into a common religious fellowship - whether it is an idea, a person, a material object, or an immaterial force - everything, can at the same time become a rock of contention or a cause of schism. Would it not follow logically, that the ultimate basis of both unity and division lies beyond these agents? I submit that the unity of the Church rests ultimately upon the will of God, or as Paul might have put it, upon the "mind of Christ." But the sinfulness of man has distorted the very

agents of unity until they become instruments of schism.

It is necessary at this juncture to point out one very important fact: namely, that the unity for which Christ prayed is not an attribute of the Church which can be isolated from its other qualities, such as holiness or apostolicity.² In a sense, all these characteristics cohere and are mutually dependent. Thus, when the holiness or the apostolicity of the Church is challenged, its unity is ultimately in danger as well. Nor can one attribute be effectively strengthened at the expense of all the others, though it may be made to suffer a temporary set-back in order that the rest may be strengthened. In other words, the governing consideration is what is best for the Church as a totality. This, I feel, is the key to the understanding of the Spirit as a unitive force. The Spirit works to improve the Church in all its parts; It seeks to make the Church holy as well as united. For the Body of Christ can be holy only if it is united, and it can be united only if it is holy.

To effect this end, the Spirit strives eternally against the sin which would corrupt the very institution whose purpose it is to overcome sin. Through sinful men, the "earth's slow stain" discolours the fabric of holiness which is the distinguishing mark of Christ's Church. But when the Spirit would bring back the Church to a purer estate, the pride and ambition of worldly men

² John 17:21. On this cf. A.C. Headlam, The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion, p. 217.

(usually leaders in the Church!) resist, and schism is the result. On the other hand, an undivided Church which has forsaken the ideal of holiness soon decays until there is nothing worth keeping united. Thus, even in the act of promoting a condition which makes schism inevitable, the Spirit promotes unity.

Whether or not the historical evidence, adduced in Chapter Three, provides convincing proof of this claim, the reader will have to judge. It is my contention that there is a solid historical basis for designating the work of the Spirit as an active integrating and unifying agent in the primitive Church. The fact that spiritual manifestations have also proved divisive does not obviate this contention. It is not the Spirit which causes schism but sin - in the world, in the Church, and in the heart of man. Meanwhile, true unity is promoted - a spiritual unity, an inner unity, a unity of holiness. Without these, the Church could not long endure.

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